



## Endangered animals introduction

The IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) red list of threatened species defines an ‘endangered’ species as one facing a ‘very high risk’ of extinction in the wild. This could be because the individual numbers of animals remaining is very low or because they are restricted to a small area.

These categories are based on global data. Animals that are classed as of ‘Least Concern’ may still have dramatically reduced in numbers in certain areas.



Although extinction is a natural phenomenon, scientists estimate that we are currently losing species at a rate 1,000 to 10,000 times that expected naturally. Some are saying we are in the sixth wave of mass extinctions that have occurred in the past half-billion years, the last being the extinction of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago.

### Endangered animals in Scotland

What endangered animals can you name? Pandas, gorillas, tigers are common answers. We often think of endangered animals living in the plains of Africa or in the depths of the rainforest. But what about endangered animals in Scotland? As in all developed countries, human activity in Scotland has had a huge impact on the environment- from habitat loss to over-hunting, pollution and invasive species.

## EXTINCT IN SCOTLAND



Lynx went extinct over 1000 years ago in Scotland due to habitat destruction and over-hunting. Lynx help control populations of small, quickly reproducing species (e.g. rabbits).



Wolves went extinct in Scotland about 400 years ago, due to over-hunting. Wolves manage populations of large herbivores (e.g. deer) allowing vegetation to flourish.



Beavers went extinct in Scotland over 400 years ago due to over-hunting for their fur. Beavers are a 'keystone species', creating wetland habitats for other animals by damming waterways. Following the Scottish Beaver Trial, the government are currently considering proposals to re-introduce the beaver.

## UNDER THREAT IN SCOTLAND



Atlantic Bluefin Tuna have seen a 51% decline in the last 40 years due to overfishing. Found across the Atlantic, including in Scottish waters they are a globally endangered species.



75% of the UK red squirrel population is located in Scotland. Their numbers have dramatically declined since the introduction of the grey squirrel from America in the 19th Century. Greys outcompete reds for food and habitat and also carry the deadly squirrelpox virus.



There are believed to be between 40 and 400 Scottish wildcats left in the wild. Historic persecution by gamekeepers, habitat loss and hybridisation with domestic cats have all contributed to it becoming one of the rarest species in Scotland.