# UK-born lynx from Newquay Zoo set for pioneering reintroduction in Germany



A female lynx born at Newquay Zoo in Cornwall is poised to potentially become the first zoo-born wildcat in the UK to be successfully reintroduced into the wild. This initiative is part of a broader effort to enhance genetic diversity among lynx populations in Europe, where the species have been preserved and bred primarily for conservation purposes.

The lynx was transported to the Black Forest region of Germany, where it will undergo a period of observation within a 1,200-square-metre enclosure. John Meek, the curator at Newquay Zoo, expressed an emotional connection to the animal, stating, “I’m a big boy but I had a few tears in my eyes. Nowadays, zoos are not here to keep animals in cages. They’re there for conservation. And this is it, conservation in action.”

Historically, lynx were native to the UK but were driven to extinction several hundred years ago. Today, there is a growing call for their reintroduction, particularly as deer populations have reached unprecedented levels. Lynx can weigh up to 30 kilograms and are known to hunt deer, which helps control these populations, thereby preventing overgrazing in forested areas.

Dina Gebhardt, the lynx-breeding coordinator for the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP) based at Bern Animal Park, had issued a request for female lynxes to assist with genetic diversity among the lynx community. Importantly, she noted, “Our nature is very fragmented… And this means we created a lot of barriers for the lynx, which leads to inbreeding.” Gebhardt is responsible for coordinating the reproduction and relocation of lynxes across Europe, and her matchmaking efforts are critical for the continued health of the population.

It is worth noting that the reintroduction of zoo-born animals can be challenging due to concerns about their lack of survival skills and dependency on human interaction. The Newquay lynx, however, is being monitored closely to evaluate its ability to adapt to wild conditions. Eva Klebelsberg, who oversees the lynx reintroduction programme for Baden-Württemberg, indicated that, despite a lack of experience in the wild, the lynx would likely retain instinctual hunting abilities. She remarked, “If you know your cats, you know that even a cat that has lived in a room its whole life, once it gets out is able to kill a bird or a mouse.”

Over the coming months, the primary focus will be on the lynx's ability to minimise human interaction, as its adaptation to a wild habitat depends significantly on its behaviour towards people. Dr Marco Roller, from Karlsruhe Zoo, highlighted the importance of ensuring that the lynx does not develop aggressive behaviours or curiosity that could lead to conflicts with humans. He stated, “Central Europe is very crowded and we don’t have many places where there is enough space for larger animals.”

As part of the reintroduction process, the next decision concerning the Newquay lynx's future will be made after extensive monitoring later in the summer, assessing whether it can thrive in its new environment. This initiative signifies a notable step in conservation efforts for the lynx in Europe, aiming to rebuild populations and restore ecological balance.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

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