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<AT>The return of the Iberian wild goat *Capra pyrenaica* to Portugal: from reintroduction to recolonization

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<ABS-HEAD>Abstract

<ABS-P>The Iberian wild goat (*Capra pyrenaica*) is an endemic species of the Iberian Peninsula. Of the four generally accepted subspecies (*Capra pyrenaica victoriae*, *C.p. hispanica*, *C.p. pyrenaica*, *C.p. lusitanica*) only two subsist (*C.p. victoriae*, *C.p. hispanica*). The subspecies once found in Portugal, *C.p. lusitanica*, became extinct in the 19th century. However, the reintroduction of the *C.p. victoriae* in north-west Spain, led to the natural recolonization of this subspecies into Portugal. Knowledge of the Iberian wild goat in Portugal is still limited, making it difficult to evaluate the major conservation/management needs. To fill this gap, here we describe the historical distribution of the Iberian wild goat in Portugal and summarize the available information on the reintroduction and recolonization process of this species. Additionally, we used line itinerary survey (2011-2012), coupled with Distance Sampling, to estimate current densities, range and population structure of the Iberian wild goat distribution in Portugal. The Iberian wild goat density is 2.78/100 ha (95% CI: 1,72 – 4,50; CV: 18,36%) and the abundance is of 576 (CI 95%: 356 – 930; CV: 18,36%). The distribution data shows that the population is divided in three nuclei: 1- *Serra do Gerês* (13,840 ha); 2 – *Serra Amarela* (1,235 ha); 3 – *Castro Laboreiro* (343 ha), in a total area of 15,418 ha. Iberian wild goat population in Portugal has greatly increased in the last years, both in number and distribution range. The demographic data shows a potential for increase in the next years but our current ecological background knowledge still remains limited. Iberian wild goat management will benefit from a long-term project including public awareness, scientific research and management solutions.

<KWD>Keywords: *Capra pyrenaica*; Iberian Peninsula; historical distribution; reintroduction;

Distance Sampling.

INTRODUCTION

The Iberian wild goat (*Capra pyrenaica*) is a wild ungulate endemic to the Iberian Peninsula (Pérez et al., 2002; Herrero & Pérez, 2014); and formerly had a wider distribution range in almost all the Iberian Peninsula mountain ranges (Antunes, 1987; Moreno-García et al., 2003; Valente, 2004; Baptista & Reis, 2006). During the last centuries, several threats (e.g., hunting pressure, severe sarcoptic mange outbreaks, habitat destruction and fragmentation) led to a massive decline of the Iberian wild goat numbers and

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