

Hunting, climate change and random factors as threats to mammals – only the arctic fox is in a dire situation

There are eight threatened mammal species in Finland. Previously assessed to be near threatened, the Eurasian lynx is now classified as least concern. In contrast, the conservation status of the Siberian flying squirrel worsened from near threatened to vulnerable.

The Eurasian lynx was reclassified as least concern based on the number of reproductive individuals. The status of the species had already improved from vulnerable to near threatened in the previous assessment, conducted in 2015.



Thanks to the increase in its population over the course of several years, the Eurasian lynx could be reclassified from near threatened to least concern. The Eurasian lynx can be found across Finland and occasionally even in the Åland Islands. Photo by Petri Ahlroth.

The Siberian flying squirrel was moved from the near threatened category back to being vulnerable. This change is, above all, based on the acquisition of more detailed data but also on the change in the species' status. More comprehensive monitoring data was now available compared to the previous assessment conducted in 2015. Based on monitoring, the decrease in the population exceeded the 30% limit value for the threatened status during the last 10-year monitoring period, whereas the decline observed during the monitoring period examined in the previous assessment was slightly less steep.

The assessment of threatened mammal species encompassed 75 species and subspecies found in Finland. The Red List category of 55 of these species remained unchanged.

Species that do not reproduce in Finland, as well as alien species not included in the native fauna of Finland, were considered to be ineligible for assessment.

Threat from hunting, climate change and random factors

There are eight mammal species found in Finland that are categorised as threatened: the arctic fox (critically endangered), the Saimaa ringed seal, the wolverine, the grey wolf and the Natterer's bat (endangered) as well as the Nathusius' pipistrelle, the Siberian flying squirrel and the European polecat (vulnerable). In addition to this, the Eurasian beaver, the common vole, the brown bear, the Baltic ringed seal and the Finnish forest reindeer are categorised as near threatened.



A clear decrease in the number of inhabited Siberian flying squirrel territories was observed in standard censuses. Other long-term monitoring efforts support the notion of the decline in the population of the Siberian flying squirrel. Photo by Marko Schrader, Image Bank of the Environmental Administration.

The most common causes of mammal species becoming threatened and threats to them in the future include hunting (both legal and illegal), legal bycatch and random factors related to small population sizes. Climate change also plays a part in the decline of the arctic fox, the Baltic ringed seal and the Saimaa ringed seal.

Forest management and changes in the structure of forests are considered to threaten two species in Finland, namely the Siberian flying squirrel and the Finnish forest reindeer. Other individual factors threatening mammals include disturbance, interspecies competition, cross-breeding, genetic problems, predation and pollutants.

Protection as well as conservation and management plans contribute to the growth of mammal populations

Of the animal conservation methods employed in Finland, the practice of designating species as protected is considered to be the most effective and comprehensive in regards to population coverage. In Finland, all species not specifically listed as game species or

unprotected species in the Hunting Act are considered to be protected. The protection of game species and hunting seasons are regulated by the Hunting Act and annual decrees.

Finland has prepared conservation and management plans for several mammal species. These plans are needed when there are several operators involved in the implementation of conservation and management measures or when these measures have an impact on people's business and recreational activities. In recent years, Finland has prepared new plans and programmes or updated the existing plans and programmes for all large predators, the Finnish forest reindeer, seals, beaver species and the Saimaa ringed seal.

Implementation of the assessment

The assessment of threatened mammal species was conducted as part of an assessment of all species in Finland. The assessment is based on the criteria and classification of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). By request of the Ministry of the Environment, the assessment was conducted by a working group appointed by the Finnish Mammalogical Society. The working group included members from Natural Resources Institute Finland, the Finnish Environment Institute, the Finnish Museum of Natural History and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

More information

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Links

- [The 2019 Red List of Finnish Species](#)
- [The 2015 Red List of Finnish Mammal Species](#)
- [Web service of the Finnish Red List](#)