

The secret life of lynx

- Examining the visitors effect and more
in captive lynx (*Lynx lynx*)



Background

Eurasian lynx is the only native wild cat in Scandinavia. Their Swedish populations are **vulnerable** according to the IUCN. By examining their behavior in zoos we might learn more about them as a species as well as find ways to improve their welfare in captivity.

The aim of this study is to expand on the knowledge of lynx behavior in captivity.

The visitors effect refers to the consequences of human visitors on the behavior and wellbeing of captive animals on display. How visitors impact an animal is dependent on many different factors.

The effect is associated with negative welfare and may result in things such as **decreased social** and **play** behaviors, **increased hiding, aggressiveness** and **stereotypies**.

Method

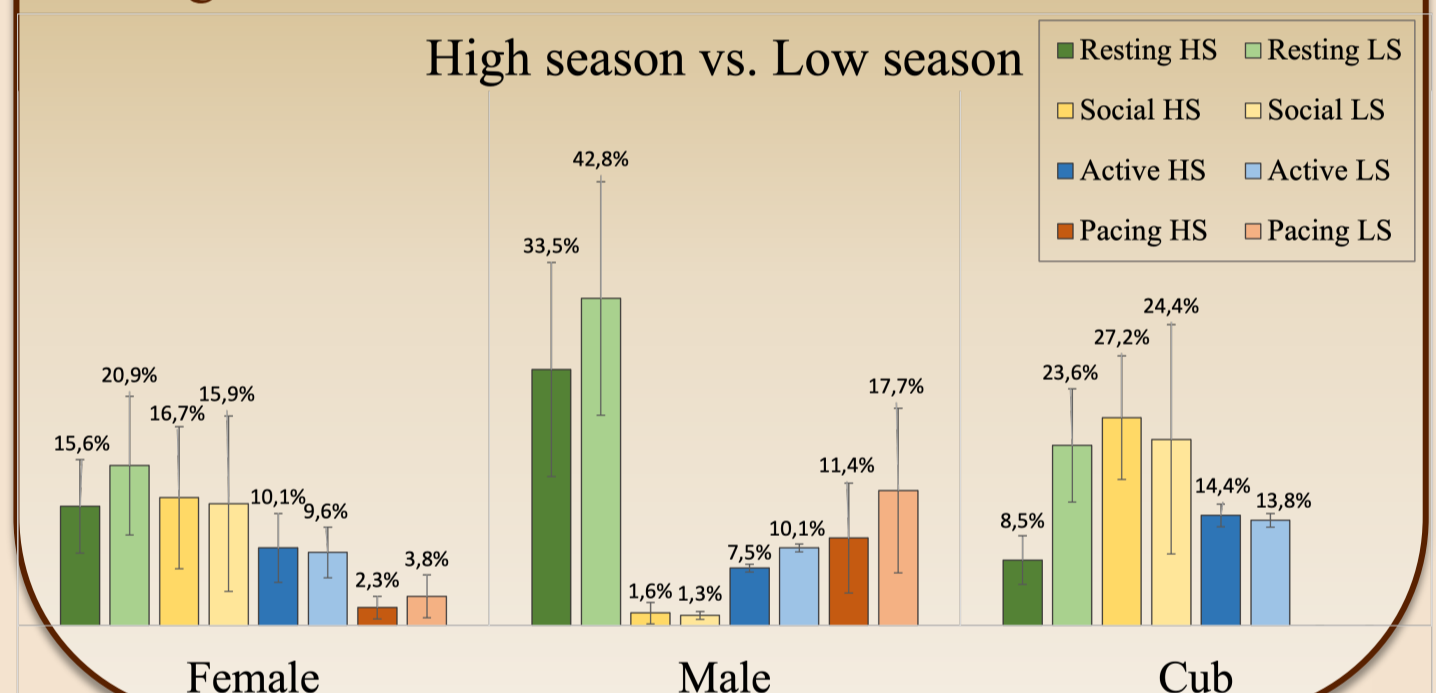
Three Swedish zoos were chosen to participate in the study. Together they provided a total of **8** lynx. Three adult females, three adult males and two cubs of equal age and sex.

The observations were carried out in two periods with high contrast in visitors, high season and low season. The behaviors were measured with the help of an ethogram which was specifically designed for felines.



Results

Results showed differences in behavior between high and low season, mornings and afternoons, between the zoos and between males and females. Due to the small sample size, only a few of these visible differences turned out significant.



Discussion

- ❖ Each lynx has their own personality which causes large variation in the data. Future studies with greater sample numbers might yield more significant results.
- ❖ Visitors have an arguably negative effect on the wellbeing of lynx which zoos should take into consideration when planning exhibits.
- ❖ There is a large variation between the zoos despite all of them being in the same country
- ❖ All zoos had animals who performed **stereotypies** but the cause for this is not completely clear.
- ❖ My findings also highlight the importance of **natural reproduction**.
- ❖ Lynx who had cubs regularly demonstrated more positive behaviors connected to high welfare.
- ❖ Mothers with cubs **paced less, played with** and **groomed** their cubs as well as their partners. While enrichment provided by the zoo-keepers is important, nothing can replace having their very own cub.
- ❖ As always, further research is needed.



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