

Life History and Diet

Lynx normally breed during March–April while bobcats breed during December–March in the southern portion of their range and during March–April in the northern portion. Litter sizes vary for lynx from 4 to 5 when prey is abundant to 2 to 3 when prey is scarce. Bobcat litter sizes range from 1 to 6 and average 2.7 kittens. The young of both species are independent by age 1 year, and by 2 years of age they have grown to full size and usually breed.

The snowshoe hare is by far the most important prey item for lynx. The availability of hares largely controls lynx abundance across most of their range. Other prey species important to lynx are red squirrels, mice, other rodents, and birds. Bobcat diet consists mainly of cottontail rabbits, jackrabbits, and snowshoe hares, but they also consume mice, other rodents, birds, and deer.

Distribution and Habitat Preferences

Lynx occur across most of Alaska and Canada. Since 1990 in the contiguous 48 states, lynx or their tracks have been documented in Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Established populations of lynx are present in northern Maine, northeastern Minnesota, western Montana, western Wyoming, and north-central Washington. A small population was recently reintroduced in Colorado.

Habitat types preferred by lynx are variable, ranging from old-growth coniferous forests to coniferous or mixed forests that are regenerating after fire or logging. Forests that are growing back after fire or logging often provide excellent food and cover for hares, and therefore attract lynx. It is extremely rare for lynx to be found in deserts, prairies, or farmland habitats.

Bobcats are widely distributed across the United States. They are rare along portions of the mid-Atlantic coast with dense human populations. Bobcat densities are usually greater in southern states. Their northern distribution may be limited by snow depth.

Bobcats seem to prefer areas with high prey abundance and dense understory vegetation. Forest edges and rocky ledges and outcrops are also important terrain features. Bobcats thrive in a variety of habitats including dense old-growth forests, hardwood and hardwood-mixed forests, brushy habitats, deserts, prairies, swamps, and farmland habitats.

Both lynx and bobcats seem to use the convenience of logging roads in forests to aid travel.

Trapping Methods to Help Avoid Catching Lynx

To avoid lynx while trapping bobcats, trap sets should be made where bobcats are known to exist. Making