

BOBCAT

North America is the host to three kinds of wild cats: the cougar, the bobcat and the lynx. The cougar is the largest and fastest of the three. These furry mammals have similarities but it is the lynx and the bobcat which are sometimes mistaken for each other. The bobcat makes its' home in the warmer climate of southern North America while the lynx inhabits the cold north.

The bobcat got its' name because of its' stubby tail which is only a few inches long. It looks much like a housecat except for its' bigger size and shorter tail. Like the housecat its' soft fur can be spotted and/or perhaps mixed. Spikes of fur (tufts) are found in the bobcats' ear. Mutton chops is the name given to the facial fur found on its' small face. Bobcats can swim and climb trees but spend most of their time on ground.

What is the size of the bobcat? It can be 2 feet tall and 2 to 4 feet long. They weight about 25 pounds. The male and female are similar in appearance but the male cat is larger. While small cats can purr, big cats can roar. In general wild cats live solitary lives.

Wild cats live in habitats, which provide them with food and shelter. These areas include swamps, canyons and densely wooded areas. They designate their home in interesting way. Their personal territory (i-1.5 square miles) is outlined by piles of dirt and leaves. The wild cat then sprays urine which keeps other wild cats away. Because wild cats hunt at night and sleep during the day, they are rarely seen. Man "the trapper" is a threat for the bobcat. They shoot it for its' furry pelt which is tawny in summer and grey in winter. The most common wild cat is the bobcat and it is the least studied. Information depends on trappers, not scientists.

Bobcats can live in a variety of habitats and have a variety of prey. Bobcats and lynx are good hunters. Their sharp teeth and good vision aid them in their hunting. They prey upon smaller animals and are meat- eaters because of their high protein diet. Smaller animals include hairs, bats, rats and birds. Deer and porcupine are larger prey. These wild cats are a strong and stable population. However, bobcats that live in captivity have a longer lifespan because they don't have the challenge to find food. Expert hunters, they creep along the ground known as "stalking". When they "ambush" their prey, they patiently wait until they have some luck.

Bobcats have litters when they are two years old in spring. After a gestation period of two months, the mother bobcat takes all responsibility for the care of the kittens. The family lives in trees, ledges and caves. The kittens (a litter can be as many as 2-6) are breastfed until they are two month old. By the time they are six month old, they are hunting with their mother. At the age of one year they are independent and are on their own. The lynx experiences a similar lifestyle. Because the lynx has grey fur and moves speedily, it has been called "ghost of the forest".

A prime destination for hunters from all over the world, British Columbia regulates their activities on an annual basis. The Ministry of Land and Protection is "charged with responsibilities which include the regulations of programs, rules used to achieve conservation of objectives and provide first-class wildlife opportunities".

Our interest is with the bobcat and lynx. Hunting regulations are varied and detailed: for example, relating to the license year, firearm and ammunition. The gun used should have a bore size of 20 gauge or longer. Hunting fees are a flat rate of \$32 for hunters to carry firearms and hunt. For those over 65, it is \$7. Of particular interest is bag limits and possession levels. Hunters are limited to what they take. The limit on the bobcat is 5, while the lynx is limited to 1.

It has been observed that the bobcat is thriving much more than the lynx "for every 1,000,000 to 1.5 million bobcats in the US, there are fewer than 700 lynx". To conclude, the bobcat will survive if we are maintain enough wild country for their lifestyle.