

Bobcat

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Lynx rufus*. From the Latin *lynx* meaning “light,” in reference to its shining eyes, and *rufus* meaning red, which refers to its sometimes reddish color. Scientists describe 11-14 subspecies of bobcats, with *Lynx rufus baileyi* only occurring in Arizona. Bobcats also are called wildcats, bay lynx, catamounts, barred bobcats, pallid bobcats, red lynx, and cat lynx.

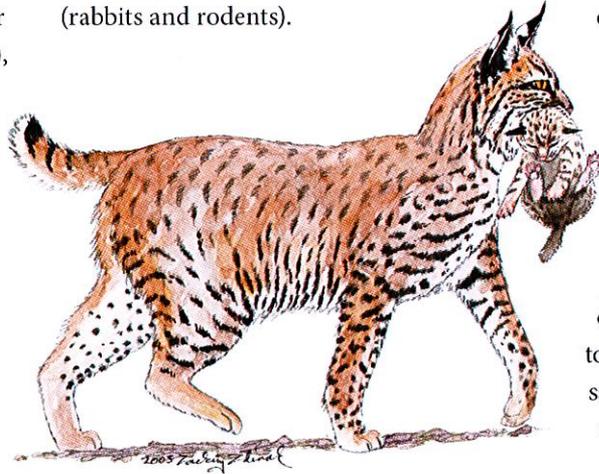
DESCRIPTION: The bobcat is named for its short “bobbed” tail (4-8 inches long), which is its most distinguishable feature. Bobcats are medium-sized cats—2-2 1/2 feet long and weighing from 12 to 30 pounds (males are larger than females). They have conspicuous side whiskers and a neck ruff; fur colors range from reddish tan to gray with whitish undersides and mottled dark spots. Their long erect ears are tipped with black tufts.

DISTRIBUTION: Bobcats are distributed throughout Arizona and are found in all habitat types. Bobcats are frequent visitors in urban areas. They are distributed throughout the rest of the United States, but are more frequently found in the western states.

HABITAT: Although found in all Arizona habitat types, the highest bobcat population densities are found in Sonoran desert-scrub, Great Basin conifer woodland, and chaparral habitats. In general, bobcats prefer areas with rocky terrain, thick cover, and abundant prey populations.

BIOLOGY: Bobcats’ primary prey is cot-

tontail rabbits and jackrabbits. Unlike their cousins the lynx, however, bobcats often prey on other species—rodents, reptiles (including rattlesnakes), birds, and, less frequently, ungulates such as mule deer, whitetail deer, javelina, and pronghorn. Bobcats can be active at any time, but are considered to have a crepuscular (dawn and dusk) activity peak. This activity pattern is based on activity patterns of most of their prey species (rabbits and rodents).



Home ranges vary greatly in size based on the quality of the habitat and the sex of the bobcat, but are found to range from about 1 to 20 square kilometers. Bobcats will mark their home ranges by deposits of urine, feces, and scrapes.

Bobcats become sexually mature at 12 to 24 months of age. The peak breeding period is late winter or early spring, with birth following 50 to 60 days later. Litter sizes are generally two to four kittens. Young disperse from their mothers at age 1.

STATUS: Bobcats are designated as both furbearers and predators in Arizona, and are considered abundant throughout the state

in appropriate habitat. Bobcats are often harvested for their furs, which can be quite valuable. Although they are not threatened, bobcats are listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in En-

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dangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) because of their similarity to other threatened species and the commercial value of their pelts. Arizona, along with several other states, has demonstrated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the management and harvest of bobcats within Arizona is not detrimental to the species, and continued harvest and sale of bobcat pelts is currently allowed under the CITES agreement.

MANAGEMENT: Harvest of bobcats is allowed during the trapping season and the sport-hunting season for predators and furbearers. Last year there were about 265 bobcats harvested through a combination of trapping and hunting. The Arizona Game and Fish Department monitors bobcat population and harvest by periodically assessing the population age structure through tooth analysis and through hunter surveys. The Department’s Research Branch is currently testing bobcat survey methods, such as track and scent-post surveys for future use. 🦋

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