



# BOBCAT

**CARNIVORA**  
**Family: Felidae**  
**Genus: *Lynx***  
**Species: *rufus***



**Range:** Southern Canada to northern Mexico including most of continental United States

**Habitat:** prefers wooded areas, but also in semi-desert, urban edge, forest edges, and swamp environments

**Niche:** Terrestrial, crepuscular, and carnivorous

**Wild diet:** mostly rabbits and hares, prey ranges in size from mouse to deer

**Zoo diet:**

**Life Span:** (Wild) 10 – 12 years

(Captivity) oldest known 32 years

**Sexual dimorphism:** Females slightly smaller

**Location in SF Zoo:** Zoo street by Lion House and Fountain opposite snow leopard

---

## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

---

The bobcat has a gray to brown coat, whiskered face, black-tufted ears and distinctive black bars on its forelegs and a black-tipped, stubby tail, from which it derives its name. There is generally an off-white color on the lips, chin, and underparts. Bobcats in the desert regions of the southwest have the lightest colored coats, while those in the northern, forested regions are darkest.

The bobcat is crepuscular. It keeps on the move from three hours before sunset until about midnight, and then again from before dawn until three hours after sunrise.

This behavior may vary seasonally, as bobcats become more diurnal during fall and winter. This is a response to the activity of their prey, which are more active during the day in colder months. Bobcats are excellent hunters, stalking prey with stealth and patience and then capturing with one great leap.

<b>Weight: M</b> 16 - 28 lbs
<b>F</b> 10 – 18 lbs
<b>Length:</b> 26 - 41 in
<b>SH:</b> 12 to 24 in
<b>TL:</b> 3.5 to 7.9 in

The cat has sharp hearing and vision, and a good sense of smell. It is an excellent climber, and will swim when it needs to, but will normally avoid water. Like all cats, the bobcat *directly registers*, meaning its hind prints usually fall exactly on top of its fore prints, which minimizes noise and visible tracks and provides sure footing for their hind paws when they navigate rough terrain. Bobcat tracks show four toes without claw marks, due to their retractable claws.

---

## STATUS & CONSERVATION

---

The bobcat has long been valued both for fur and sport; it has been hunted and trapped by humans, but has maintained a high population, even in the southern United States where it is extensively hunted. The bobcat is listed in Appendix II of CITES, which means it is not considered threatened with extinction, but that hunting and trading must be closely monitored. The subspecies *Lynx rufus escuinapae* (the Mexican bobcat) is listed as endangered and is currently protected by the Endangered Species Act.

---

## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

---

Bobcats are usually silent, although they often yowl and hiss during the mating season; they communicate in many ways that are comparable to a domesticated cat, however their growl has been compared to that of their only predator, the cougar.

Like most cats, the bobcat is largely solitary and territorial, although there is some overlap in home ranges. Territorial boundaries are established with markings, including claw marks and deposits of urine or feces; generally 25-30 square miles for males and about five square miles for females. Female territories are almost exclusive of each other, but the ranges of males overlap one another as well as those of females. The male and female interact almost exclusively during the mating season.

---

## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

---

Mating of bobcats is similar to that of domestic cats; males and females only associate for the brief time required for courtship and copulation, and both males and females may have multiple partners. Bobcats usually mate in the early spring. The kittens are altricial but well furred and already have their spots. They open their eyes for the first time when they are 10 days old. Female bobcats bring meat to their young and teach them how to hunt after they are weaned, staying with them for almost a year. Male bobcats do not help raise their offspring.

Each bobcat may have several dens, one main den and several auxiliary dens, in its territory. Females choose a secluded "natal" den to raise a litter usually in some sort of enclosed space, such as a small cave or hollow log. The auxiliary or "shelter" dens are located in less-visited portions of the home range and are often brush piles, rock ledges or stumps. When they are between 8 and 11 months, the kittens are evicted from their mother's territory.

Gestation: 50 – 70 days (seasonally polyestrous)	Sexual Maturity: 2 years
# of Mammas: 3 pair	Weaning Age: 12 weeks
# of Young: 1 – 6 (ave 3)	Weight at birth: 9.33 oz

---

## MISCELLANEOUS

---

There had been debate over whether to classify this species as *Lynx rufus* or *Felis rufus* as part of a wider issue regarding whether the four species of *Lynx* should be given their own genus, or be placed as a subgenus of *Felis*. The *Lynx* genus is now accepted. *Lynx rufus* is also known as Wildcat, Bay Lynx, Barred Bobcat, Pallid Bobcat, and Red Lynx. There are twelve recognized subspecies.

### Sources:

created 10/2011

Walker's Mammals of the World Vol 1 © 1999 Ronald M. Nowak, pgs 808-810.

[http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Lynx\\_rufus.html](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Lynx_rufus.html)

[http://www.defenders.org/wildlife\\_and\\_habitat/wildlife/bobcat.php](http://www.defenders.org/wildlife_and_habitat/wildlife/bobcat.php)

<http://www.agarman.dial.pipex.com/bobcat.htm>

<http://bss.sfsu.edu/holzman/courses/fall00projects/lynxrufus.html>

<http://www.oregonzoo.org/Cards/Felines/bobcat.htm>

<http://www.wildcatconservation.org/wild-cats/north-america/bobcat/>