

HOW TO AVOID INCIDENTAL TAKE OF LYNX

*While Trapping or Hunting Bobcats
and other Furbearers*



Updated October 2009

*Includes Quick Reference Guide

Some modifications specific to Maine were made to this USFWS/IAFWA publication by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) with permission from USFWS/IAFWA.

The purpose of this publication is to help reduce capture, injury and mortality to the Threatened Canada lynx population in the contiguous United States, which may occur as a result of hunting or trapping bobcats and other furbearers. This pamphlet was produced as a joint effort between the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA).

The mission of the USFWS is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The IAFWA governmental members include the fish and wildlife agencies of the states, provinces, and federal governments of the U.S. and Canada. All 50 states are members. The IAFWA has been a key organization in promoting sound resource management and strengthening federal, state, and private cooperation in protecting and managing fish and wildlife and their habitats in the public interest.

Front Cover:

Lynx

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

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With permission, MDIFW modified the original document published in 2003 by the USFWS and IAFWA. This booklet reflects Maine's trapping regulations and habitat conditions. MDIFW biologists Jennifer Vashon, Shannon Crowley and Scott McLellan contributed to the modification of the brochure in 2005. The 2009 update reflects recently adopted trapping regulations to minimize the take of lynx in traps and was adapted by MDIFW biologists Jennifer Vashon and John DePue.



Lynx
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HOW TO AVOID INCIDENTAL TAKE OF LYNX

While Trapping or Hunting Bobcats and other Furbearers

Canada lynx were listed by the USFWS as Threatened in the contiguous United States under the Endangered Species Act on March 24, 2000. As such, harvesting lynx is no longer permitted in any state except Alaska. In the contiguous United States, lynx may occur in Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

Harvest of bobcats and other furbearers, whether by trapping or hunting, is not affected by this ruling. However, trappers and hunters must use every reasonable effort to avoid taking lynx where they may occur in the contiguous 48 states.

Lynx are very similar in appearance and habits to bobcats. Lynx are also found where bobcats and other furbearers occur. Therefore, it is important for trappers and hunters to know how to distinguish lynx from bobcats, to recognize their preferred habitat types, and to avoid capturing or harvesting lynx. Trappers must also learn what to do if a lynx is caught incidentally.

Identifying Characteristics and Background Information

Description

Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) are medium-sized wild cats. Adult males are usually larger than females in both species. Bobcats are usually heavier than lynx; however, lynx may appear larger due to longer legs and larger feet. Bobcat weights range from 12 - 68 pounds (average 28 lbs) for males and 9 - 34 pounds (average 15 lbs) for females. Lynx weights range from 16 - 31 pounds (average 24 lbs) for males and 16 - 23 pounds (average 20 lbs) for females.

Lynx have ear tufts and facial ruffs on their cheeks that are larger and more prominent than those on bobcats. Ear tufts are usually longer than 1 inch on lynx but shorter than 1 inch on bobcats. Bobcat and lynx tails are approximately 4 – 6 inches long and match their pelt color except for the tip (about the last inch). The tip of the tail on bobcats is usually black only on the upper side whereas on lynx the entire tip is black.

Bobcat pelts may be light gray, yellowish brown, buff, brown, or reddish brown and streaked or spotted with black or dark brown. Under portions of the body are white with black spots and with black bars on the fore legs. Lynx generally have more gray and less red in their pelts than bobcats and the belly fur is grayish-white or buff-white with mottled, indistinct black spots.



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Belly Markings

In contrast to the western United States and New Brunswick, bobcats in Maine are more difficult to distinguish from lynx based on pelt color. Lynx (left) spots are slightly more mottled than bobcat (right) spots and belly hair is generally not as white as bobcat's. Bobcats have more red and brown coloration to their coats.



Note the foot size and color differences between lynx (left) and bobcat (right).

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Lynx tails appear much the same when viewed from the top (top left) or bottom (bottom left). The lynx tail tip is completely black all around, while bobcat tails show black bars with a white tip when viewed from above (top right) and show a lot of white underneath (bottom right).



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The hind legs of both bobcats and lynx are longer than their front legs, which helps them to spring and catch prey. However, the hind legs are even more disproportionately large on lynx, causing them to have a “stooped” appearance. Lynx also have much larger feet than bobcats.



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Top Left:

Bobcats usually have ear tufts shorter than 1 inch.

Top Right:

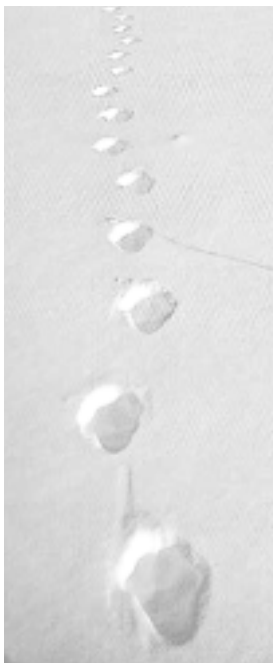
Heavily furred bobcats might appear lynx-like, with significant ear tufts and facial ruffs.

Left:

Lynx usually have ear tufts longer than 1 inch and more distinct facial ruffs.

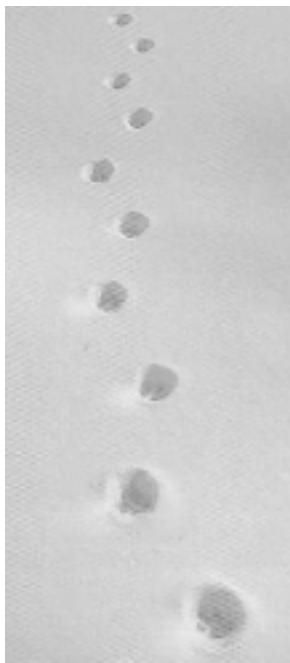
Sign

In deep snow, lynx tracks are generally less distinct than bobcat tracks, since lynx toe pads are not visible as a result of abundant foot hair. However, in wet or compacted snow, lynx toe pads are visible, which can be confused with bobcat tracks. In these situations, stride or track size will help discern lynx from bobcat. Back feet often follow in the front foot tracks of both species. When walking, the stride (distance between footprints of the opposite foot) is 6 – 14 inches for



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A set of lynx tracks in snow.



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A set of bobcat tracks in snow.

Quick Reference

(Pull-Out Section: Pages 11-14)

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Lynx
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Distinguishing Characteristics of Lynx and Bobcat

Lynx		Bobcat
Ear Tufts & Facial Ruffs	ear tufts are generally >1" larger facial ruffs with black banding at outer edges	ear tufts are generally < 1" smaller facial ruffs with less distinct banding
Pelt Color	belly fur grayish-white or buff-white with mottled, indistinct black spots	belly fur white with distinct black spots
Tail Color	generally matches body color except the tip (about the last 1") entire tip is black	usually has dark bars and a black tip (about the last 1") but only black on upper side and is white on underside
Feet	feet large and snowshoe-like hind legs are longer than the front, giving a "stooped" appearance	feet small and hind legs are not as long as lynx
Track Size	<u>in dirt</u> : up to 3 ³ / ₈ " wide x 3 ³ / ₄ " long <u>in snow</u> : up to 5 ¹ / ₂ " wide x 5 ¹ / ₂ " long stride: 11 - 18"	<u>in dirt</u> : up to 2 ⁵ / ₈ " wide x 2 ¹ / ₂ " long <u>in snow</u> : up to 2 ¹ / ₂ " wide x 2 ¹ / ₂ " long stride: 6 - 14"

Regulations to Avoid Lynx in Trap Sets

- ◆ Trappers are required to report the capture of a lynx to MDIFW before releasing the animal from a trap
 - Call 207-592-4734 (available 24hrs and 7 days a week during the trapping season)
- ◆ When setting a conibear on land in WMDs 1-11 traps must be:
 - 1) at least 4ft. above the ground or snow level and 4ft. away from any bank.
 - 2) on trees or poles no greater than 4in. wide at 4ft. above the ground and
 - 3) at an angle of 45 degrees or greater to the ground the entire distance from the ground to the trap
 - 4) The area within 4ft. of the trap in all directions must be:
 - free of objects greater than 4in. wide and
 - free of trees or poles slanted at less than a 45 degree angle between the ground & the height of the trap
 - 5) If using a pole, the pole must be a natural section of tree that has not been planed or sawed
- ◆ **Foothold traps** set in WMDs 1-6 and 8-11 can NOT have an inside jaw spread greater than 5 ³/₈" and must have at least one in-line swivel
- ◆ Bait can be used if it is completely covered to prevent it from being seen from above and is covered in a way that will withstand wind

Recommendations to Avoid Lynx in Trap Sets

- ◆ Do not set traps in the vicinity of lynx tracks
- ◆ Do not suspend flagging near traps
- ◆ Avoid using parts of rabbits or hares as bait
- ◆ Remove traps if lynx tracks observed in vicinity of a set

Recommendations to Minimize or Prevent Injury

- ◆ Stake the trap so that a lynx cannot get entangled around a solid object (even a small sapling) after being captured and keep catch circle clear of solid objects
- ◆ Check conibear traps frequently
- ◆ Trap attachment chains should be less than 9 ½" and be equipped with at least two swivels and attached at the center of the trap
- ◆ Traps should have padded, offset or laminated jaws

Lynx



- * longer ear tufts (1" or longer)
- * longer facial ruff
- * shorter and completely black-tipped tail
- * large and well-furred feet (>3" track)
- * uniform coat color
- * buff-colored hind foot

Bobcat



- * shorter ear tufts (absent to 1")
- * shorter facial ruff - more round face
- * tail black-tipped on top and white underneath
- * smaller feet (2" track)
- * less-uniform coat (white underbelly, spotted)
- * chocolate brown along back of hind foot

bobcats and 11 – 18 inches for lynx. Both bobcat and lynx track trails tend to “wander” compared with the more straight-line patterns of wild canids (foxes, coyotes and wolves). Lynx and bobcats travel and hunt with a deliberate and methodical walking pattern, rarely bounding unless chasing prey.

In dirt, lynx tracks are approximately $3\frac{1}{4}$ - $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches long and 3 - $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches wide and **in snow** up to $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide.

In dirt, bobcat tracks are approximately $1\frac{7}{8}$ - $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $1\frac{7}{8}$ - $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches wide and **in snow** up to $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. Both bobcats and lynx have 4 toe pads on the front and hind feet. Claw marks typically do not show as they do with canids.



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Canada lynx walking in deep, fluffy snow.

Canada lynx walking in shallow snow.

Life History and Diet

Lynx normally breed between March and April while bobcats breed between February and March.

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 diets consist of snowshoe hare, mice, other rodents, birds and deer.

Habitat Preferences

Lynx and bobcats prefer areas with high prey abundance and dense understory vegetation. Habitat types preferred by lynx range from mature coniferous forests to coniferous or mixed forests that are regenerating. 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 meadows, pastures or farmland habitats. Bobcats use similar habitats as lynx but are also commonly found in meadows, pastures, farmland, mixed and hardwood forests. Both lynx and bobcats seem to use the convenience of logging roads in forests to aid in travel.

Distribution

Lynx are found in northern and western Maine and are rare or absent in central and coastal areas. Bobcats are more common in western, central, and downeast Maine and are rarer in northern Maine as a result of increased snow depths.

Trapping Methods to Help Avoid Catching Lynx

Coyotes and foxes often use the same habitats as lynx. We recommend trappers use foothold traps that meet Best Management Practices (BMP) criteria.

Examples of foothold traps with an inside jawsread $< 5 \frac{3}{8}$ " that met BMP standards for coyotes and fox include: Victor Softcatch #1.5 (4-coil) and #3, Victor Plain Jaw #1.75 and #2, Sleepy Creek #1.75 offset jaws, Victor #1.75 offset laminated jaws. For complete list, see

http://www.fishwildlife.org/furbearer_resources.html

Regulations

In WMDs 1 - 6 and 8 - 11, foothold traps set on dry ground can NOT have an inside jaw spread greater than $5 \frac{3}{8}$ " and must have at least one "inline" swivel.

Trappers in WMDs 1 - 11 are now required to set conibears (killing-type traps) either:

- 1) completely under water or
- 2) at least 4ft. above the ground or snow level and 4ft. away from any bank.

When setting a conibear on land, the pole or tree that the trap is affixed to must be:

- 1) no greater than 4in. wide at 4ft. above the ground or snow
- 2) at an angle of 45 degrees or greater to the ground the entire distance from the ground to the trap.
- 3) The area within 4ft. of the trap in all directions must be:
 - free of objects greater than 4in. wide and
 - free of trees or poles slanted at less than a 45 degree angle at any point between the ground and the height of the trap.
- 4) If using a pole, the pole must be a natural section of tree that has not been planed, altered or sawed to create a flat surface.

The purpose of this rule is to ensure there are no objects that make it easier for a lynx to access the trap. Some exceptions are made for blind sets and sets under overhanging banks. Please see p. 45 (Item 18.d.2) of the Trapping and Hunting 2009-11 Laws and Rules booklet for details.



In this example conibear traps are set at or above shoulder height (over 4ft.) and 4ft. from a pole or tree with a diameter of 4in. or greater. A convenient way to measure, if your trap is 4ft. from a 4in. tree or pole, is an outstretched arm and shoulder-width. Traps must be set on trees or poles at a steep angle of at least 45 degrees from the ground and on trees 4in. or smaller (for example, the width of your palm or fist).

Remember anytime you are trapping, bait (i.e. meat, feathers, bone, fur or other animal matter) within 50 feet of your trap can only be used if it is completely covered from above and is covered in a way to withstand wind action. This regulation was adopted to protect eagles and other raptors from being caught in traps. Because bobcats can not be harvested during the early coyote/fox season, other visual attractors such as flagging can not be used. See the law book for additional information.

Recommendations

To avoid lynx while trapping bobcats, trap sets should be made where bobcats are known to exist. Making trap sets near existing bobcat tracks is often successful because bobcats often reuse the same travel patterns within their territories. Trap set locations that tend to avoid lynx include open meadows, pastures and crop lands. Lynx rarely use agricultural lands and generally prefer to hunt and travel in forested or brushy areas.

Trap sets that are effective for bobcats also appeal to lynx. Lures and baits that appeal to one species appeal to the other, as well. Baits of rabbits, hares, or parts of rabbits or hares should not be used if lynx may frequent the area. During the bobcat trapping season, flagging should not be used as a visual attractor near traps if lynx may be present.

All types of foothold traps should be staked solidly to prevent animals from harming themselves by entangling around trees or brush. Trap attachment chains should be less than 9 1/2" and equipped with at least two swivels. All chains should be attached at the center of the trap frame.

Lynx often avoid traps set for foxes and coyotes when the traps are placed in open fields. The use of tainted, rather than fresh meat baits, also tends not to attract lynx while still providing significant attraction to coyotes and foxes.

Whenever a lynx frequents an area, traps should not be set in the vicinity. If lynx tracks are observed in the vicinity of a conibear set, the trap should be removed.

Bobcat Hunting Methods to Help Avoid Taking Lynx

Tracks should be closely examined and measured before any trailing dogs are released. (See “Sign” section, page 10). Any treed bobcat should carefully be identified and confirmed to not be a lynx before it is harvested. A treed lynx should be abandoned immediately with harnessed dogs in tow.

If predator calls are used in areas lynx may frequent, it is essential to identify and confirm any responding animals to assure a lynx is not shot. Since it may be difficult or impossible to positively identify a moving or partially hidden animal as a lynx or bobcat, it is best not to shoot at all whenever positive identity is unknown.

Reducing Mortality and Injuries to Incidentally Captured Lynx

IFW regulations require all incidentally trapped lynx be reported to either a biologist or warden as soon as possible and prior to removing the animal from the trap, unless a Department official cannot be reached in time to prevent injury to the lynx. Any lynx released under this provision must be reported to the Department within 24 hours from the time it was discovered.

Call **207-592-4734** (24hr/7 days a week) to report the incidental capture of a lynx in a trap. Additional phone numbers for all MDIFW offices are listed on page 23 to further assist you in reporting and acquiring help in releasing a lynx from a trap.



Trappers are required to report the capture of a lynx in a trap before releasing the animal. MDIFW staff will release all lynx from traps with few exceptions.

In the rare event that you cannot reach MDIFW personnel in time to prevent injury to a lynx, please release the animal as soon as possible using recommendations outlined as follows. A catchpole should be used to allow safe release of any unintended animal captures. Care should be taken to approach any trapped animals slowly and avoid excessive movement. A trapped lynx will allow the catchpole loop to be placed over its head, but it can be expected to react when the loop is tightened.

Tighten the catchpole loop sufficiently to hold the lynx without cutting off its air supply. Once the loop is around the lynx head, pin the end of catchpole against the ground to restrain the head. Once the head is down, quickly place a foot, with light pressure only, on the hindquarters to restrain the rear legs. Remove the trap with your remaining free hand and foot. Securely hold the catchpole until the loop is relaxed and the animal has been freed.

If a catchpole is not available, an alternative method to release lynx is to cut a strong forked stick to allow the pinning of the lynx's neck and shoulder to the ground while the trap is removed.

Never attempt to render a trapped lynx unconscious with a blow to the nose or head or by any other means. Life threatening injury to the lynx may result.

Care should be taken at all times when releasing a lynx because they are capable of injuring the trapper with their teeth or claws. Always be aware a trapped lynx may try to kick at you with claws extended on any foot. Wearing thick gloves to release trapped animals is always wise.

Reporting Incidentally Captured Lynx
IFW regulations require all incidentally trapped lynx be reported to either a biologist or warden as soon as possible and prior to removing the animal from the trap, unless a Department official cannot be reached in time to prevent injury to the lynx. Any lynx released under this provision must be reported to the Department within 24 hours from the time it was discovered.

Please contact your local MDIFW office or the Bangor office for assistance with releasing a lynx. *During the trapping season, a number will also be available after business hours: 207-592-4734.* If you cannot reach MDIFW personnel, release the animal as soon as possible. We would appreciate you providing us with the location of capture and whether the animal was marked with eartags and/or a radiocollar.

Lynx Hotline: 207-592-4734

Bangor: (207) 941-4466

Ashland: (207) 435-3231

Greenville: (207) 695-3756

Enfield: (207) 732-4132

Houlton State Police: 1-800-924-2261

Orono State Police: 1-800-432-7381



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Lynx: *Note long ear tufts, large feet, and completely black-tipped tail.*



Roger W. Barbour

Bobcat: *Note shorter ear tufts, smaller feet, and tail coloration.*



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