

Bobcat

Lynx rufus



From left to right: Bobcats are territorial animals that use scent markings to establish their ground (courtesy of pixdaus.com); Bobcats have distinctive tracks almost two inches in length (courtesy of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment); their range extends from northern Mexico to southern Canada (courtesy of National Geographic)

1 1/2"



1 3/8"

Never seen a bobcat? These wild cats are elusive and nocturnal, so they're rarely viewed by humans. But don't let their subtle nature fool you: bobcats are the most abundant wild cat in the United States, and as many as one million individuals are believed to occupy America's forests, swamps, deserts, and even suburban areas.



Twice the size of an average house cat!

Bobcats aren't your average house cat: weighing up to 30 pounds, they're approximately twice the size. Most bobcats are brownish-red with a white underbelly. Bobcats are named for their tails, which are short and appear cut-off or "bobbed". Bobcat tracks are distinctive and can be identified by their size (about 1 3/4" long by 2" wide) and four toes. Bobcat tracks do not show claw marks, because the cats have retractable claws. Bobcats may be confused with their close cousin, the lynx, but lynx are much more rare and do not exist in Vermont.

Like other cats, bobcats are carnivorous and eat primarily mice, rabbits, squirrels, and birds. They can take down large prey, such as adult deer, but tend to stick with smaller game. Bobcats are excellent hunters, and they hunt with stealth and patience before capturing prey in one, big leap. They are solitary and may inhabit many dens – one "main den" (usually a hollow log or rock shelter) and several "auxiliary dens" (brush piles or rock ledges). Young bobcats stay with their mother for 9 to 12 months, and head off on their own when they know how to hunt.



A Lake Champlain Land Trust Nature Snapshot

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