

Human safety

Due to their smaller size, bobcats are generally not considered a threat to people, though very small children should always be monitored outside. Like all wildlife, bobcats should not be fed and picking up kittens is illegal.

Feeding or picking up kittens and raising them leads to habituated bobcats—when they lose their natural fear of people and start associating people with providing an easy meal. Bobcats and other wildlife that are habituated can become aggressive, which can eventually lead to them being put down to protect public safety.

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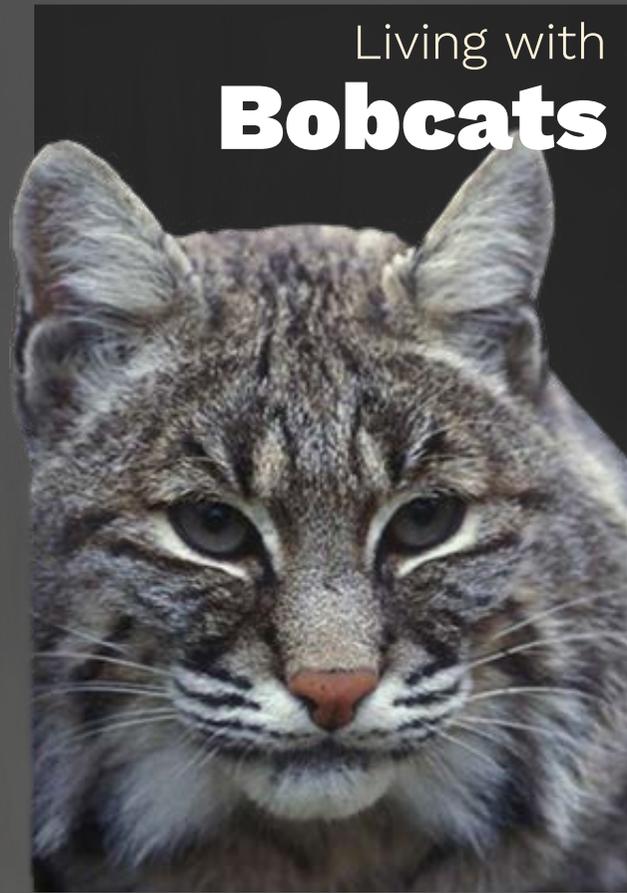
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Living with Bobcats



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Bobcats in Oregon

The bobcat, or *Lynx rufus*, is the smallest wild felid in Oregon. It's about twice the size of a domestic cat, with longer legs, small feet and a muscular, compact body. Look for the short "bobbed" tail (hence its name bobcat) to identify it from other wild felids and domestic cats. The bobcat occurs statewide in Oregon and may be found in all areas. Like other wild felids, bobcats are reclusive and solitary, so sightings are rare. But if you are lucky, you might catch a glimpse of one anywhere there is cover nearby—so at the golf course or in a suburban yard near a forest. Bobcats will use large brush or log piles and hollow trees or logs as dens in wooded areas. They will tend to avoid deep winter snow as their smaller feet reduce their mobility in snow.

Diet

Like other felids, bobcats are strict carnivores. Their diet consists mainly of small mammals and birds. Among the mammals; wood rats, squirrels, mice, rabbits and hares are the bulk of their diet. Bobcats are also the chief predator of the mountain beaver (*Aplodontia rufa*) in western Oregon forests. Although deer (mostly fawns) occasionally are killed and eaten, most of the deer meat found in bobcat stomachs has been carrion. Birds in the bobcat's diet tend to be ground dwellers such as grouse and quail but can include almost any bird that forages among the leaf litter and brushy patches.

Physical characteristics

In general, a bobcat's coloration and spotting is highly variable, with coat colors ranging from blonde, to reddish, to charcoal gray and spots ranging from barely visible to very distinct rosettes. The ears are black with a large white spot and are equipped with short black tufts. The tail is white underneath, black-tipped and there may be several blackish bars proximate to the tip. The underbelly is white with dark spots and the legs and feet are whitish with dark spots or bars. The sides of the face are extended by a ruff of fur. Bobcats in western Oregon possess more distinct markings and tend to be more reddish than those in eastern Oregon, which tend towards more of a gray color overall with an underbelly that is more white than western Oregon cats.

Behavior

Bobcats can be active at any time of day or night but are primarily crepuscular, meaning they're most active at dusk and dawn. In winter, bobcats tend to avoid activity during periods of low temperatures. Bobcats spend periods of inactivity at resting or den sites in natural cavities, hollow logs, or protected areas under logs. The breeding season usually begins in February, and after a gestation period of about 60 days, two to four young are born. The young are well-furred and spotted at birth; their eyes open in about 9 days. The kittens are weaned when about 2 months old. They are dependent on their mother until early fall, at which time they begin to fend for themselves. As solitary, territorial species, young bobcats usually leave their mother's territory before reaching one year of age in order to establish their own territory.

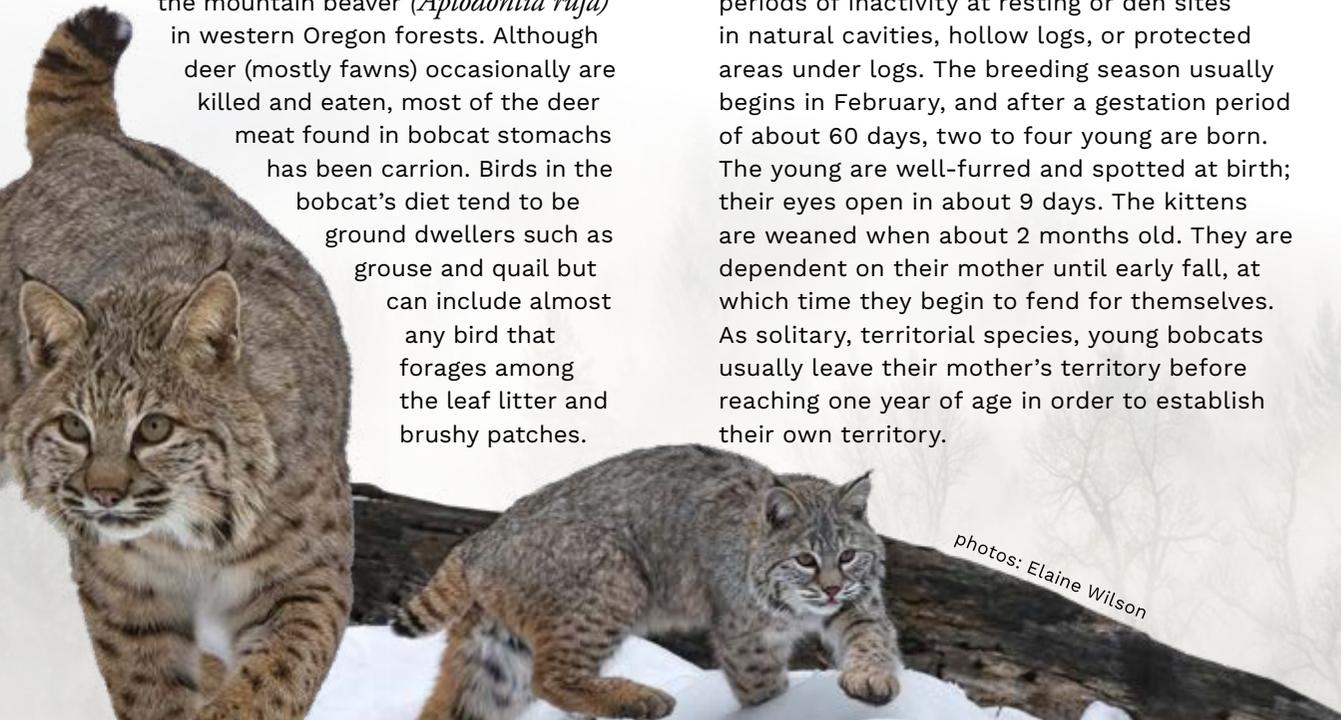
Status under Oregon law

Bobcats are classified as protected furbearers under Oregon state law. With proper licenses and permits, hunters and trappers are allowed to harvest bobcats at certain times of year (December through February), and bag limits vary between western and eastern Oregon. Oregon has less than 3,000 licensed furbearer hunters and trappers statewide, and the current annual harvest is around 2,000 statewide. All harvested bobcats must be checked in through ODFW offices which helps the department track the population. Under Oregon laws (ORS 498.012), a landowner may kill a bobcat that is causing damage (e.g. attacking or killing livestock) or one that is a public nuisance or health risk. No ODFW permit is required. However, the person must immediately report the kill to OSP or ODFW and dispose of the animal as directed. ODFW recommends that anyone experiencing problems first contact their [local district office](#) for advice, and also report any incidents (including take of a bobcat due to damage or nuisance) to your local office.

Protecting livestock and pets and responding to damage:

Bobcats can also prey upon domestic sheep, goats, and poultry but generally, they depredate livestock at lower levels than other carnivores. Landowners having issues with bobcats can take these steps to protect their animal or call ODFW for assistance.

- Fence and shelter livestock. Move them to secure coops, sheds or barns at night.
- Feed pets indoors, keep them indoors at night and keep them on a leash/under your control while walking in wild areas.
- Do not feed any wildlife. By attracting other wildlife, you may attract a bobcat.
- Keep areas around bird feeders clean. Bobcats prey on birds and small mammals.



photos: Elaine Wilson