

# Bobcat

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## *Lynx rufus*

The bobcat is a North American mammal of the cat family Felidae. It is a solitary animal and lives a secret life. Even where populations are high, it is an elusive animal.

### DESCRIPTION

The bobcat is a medium size cat that is reddish brown to a smoky gray in color with spots or streaks of black along the back and sides. The belly is white with black spots. Unlike most cats, bobcats have a very short tail that is white on the underside with a black tip. The ears have black tufts and the fur along the side of the face hangs down as if it was wearing sideburns. Bobcats have large eyes with elliptical pupils that give it excellent eyesight.

### DISTRIBUTION

The bobcat is common in Alabama and throughout the United States. Bobcats are mainly nocturnal animals but can be seen feeding along wood lines or agricultural fields in the early morning or late afternoon before dark.

### HABITAT

Bobcats live in a variety of habitats such as heavily wooded uplands, bottomland forest, brushy areas, swamps and semi-open farmland but prefer rocky outcrops and canyons.

### DIET


Seldom seen during the daylight hours, bobcats do most of their hunting at night. Bobcats are carnivores that feed primarily on rabbits and other small mammals such as rats, mice, squirrels, chipmunks, and voles. They will occasionally feed on deer, mostly carrion, during the deer hunting season. Other food sources may include opossum, raccoon, skunk, birds and snakes.

### REPRODUCTION

Breeding begins in mid-winter through spring with peak breeding in December to late February. Females will construct a nest of dead leaves, moss and dried grass under a large rock ledge, in a hollow tree or log and in holes under roots of trees. After a gestation period of 62 days, females will have a litter of one to six kittens (with an average of two or three) that are blind and furred.

Kittens are weaned about two months after birth. Both parents feed and care for the kittens while they are still in the den. Kittens will stay with the female until the female mates and becomes pregnant again. Females come into heat between their first and second year and males are capable of breeding in their second year.

### CONSERVATION STATUS

The bobcat is classified as a furbearer in Alabama and may be trapped in season as designated by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. 

## FACTS ABOUT BOBCATS

- ▶ There are 12 recognized subspecies of the bobcat.
- ▶ The bobcat's tail is somewhat stubby or "bobbed," which gives the species its name.
- ▶ Wide variations in color occur with bobcats. Some may appear black, but upon close examination still exhibit a spot pattern.
- ▶ Bobcats typically live to six or eight years of age, with a few reaching beyond 10.