

Florida Bobcat

Lynx rufus floridanus

Class: Mammalia **Order:** Carnivora **Family:** Felidae

Other names:

Other Subspecies: Thirteen bobcat subspecies are currently recognized [1]

Brandywine Zoo Bobcat 0.1

'Squeakers' 0.1 – female

DOB: 4/2005, Aq: 10/23/2007

About Squeakers

Squeakers was wild born in Louisiana, she came to the Brandywine Zoo from Audobon Zoo with her sister, 'Scar,' who was later placed at another facility. Both were rehab animals. She weighs 26 lbs.

Status least concern

Geographic Region

Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) live in northern Mexico, most of the United States, and southern Canada.

Florida bobcats (*L. r. floridanus*) are found in the southeastern United States and inland to the Mississippi valley, up to southwestern Missouri and southern Illinois

Habitat

Most live in deciduous or coniferous forests. Some live in swamps, deserts, mountainous areas and brushland.

Characteristics

Size length: 25-41" [1], but average is 32" (head to base of tail)

Height range: 1 to 2 ft. (ground to shoulder)

Average weight: 9-33lbs [2]

Longevity: Wild- 10-13 years **Captivity-** up to 25-30 years [3]

Physical Description

- The bobcat gets its name from its short or "bobbed" tail.
- The bobcat looks like its larger a lynx relative, but it has shorter legs, smaller feet and less distinct jowls and ear tips.
- Its fur is short, soft, and dense. The coat color is generally dark brown with black spots and bars most visible along the sides and legs.
- Bobcats have longer cheek fur forming 'sideburns' [4]
- The back of the ears are white with a black outline. Many cats have these white spots, called **ocelli**, that look like eyes on the back of their ears.

Dimorphism

Males: Males are 30 to 40 percent larger than females [3].

Females:

Diet: Carnivore

Diet in the Wild: Prey types include game. The cottontail rabbit is the top preferred food [4]. Additionally, they will hunt small rodents, deer, hog, opossum, raccoon, birds, and snakes. Because of this wide selection of prey, they can be considered generalists/opportunistic - animals which feed off many different types of other animals [3]. They may eat unspoiled carrion if they encounter it. [3]

Diet at the Zoo: chicken, beef, fresh meats, turkey, whole bones and carcasses

Behavior

- *Nocturnal* and *crepuscular* (can be active from dusk through dawn depending on the season).
- Good climbers, but they prefer the ground and are also good swimmers, but only if forced [4].

Feeding Behavior

- They generally stalk and ambush their prey, but sometimes lie and wait for prey to walk by.
- Each adult maintains and defends its home range. Individuals of the same sex do not share the same home range. These territories range from 0.5 to 25 square miles.
- Prey is killed with a bite to the vertebrae of the neck [2].
- During lean periods, it will often prey on larger animals it can kill and return to feed on later [1].



Social Structure

- It is territorial and *solitary* [3].
- A male has access to two or more females in his range with which he can mate. Home ranges are elliptical in shape and boundaries often follow roads, streams, or other natural contours.
- Bobcats maintain and defend their ranges with the use of territorial markers like urine, feces, scrapes, and tree scratches placed along the perimeter and within their territory.

Reproduction

- *Placental mammal*
- **Iteroparous**
- Mating usually occurs from the late winter to early spring [3].
- Courtship and mating usually lasts one to two days. During this time, the male and female will travel, hunt, and eat together, but afterwards the pair will separate. Mating is the only time that adult bobcats are together.
- *Polyandrous*, Both males and females may have multiple partners.
- Gestation lasts about 2 months, after which a female gives birth to one to six (usually two or three) kittens. Births usually occur in the late winter or early spring. After teaching her kittens how to hunt for food, the mother will abandon her kittens and/or evict them from her home range at about 8-12 months. Likely she does this because she has become pregnant again and wants to protect her new kittens from her old kittens.
- They are weaned at 7 to 8 weeks and leave their mother during the first fall [3].

Conservation:

- **Use & Trade:** One of the biggest concerns for the bobcat is that they are being hunted and trapped for their fur pelts. Due to urban and agricultural expansion, the bobcat is also losing much of its natural range
 - Hunting is still a problem for these beautiful animals, too. The soft, luxurious coat that keeps lynx warm and comfortable in the colder months is also popular in the fur industry, especially the lighter-colored belly fur. It is estimated that about 90,000 bobcat and lynx pelts are sold each year to fur markets [5].
- **Threats:** Disease, parasites, hunting by humans, automobile accidents, and starvation are the most common causes of death.
 - Bobcats often compete with coyotes for the same food and shelter [5].
 - They are having a harder time finding food as more people move into the cats' habitats. And in some areas, their forest homes are being cut down for agricultural uses [5].
- **Predators:** Its main predator is humans, but occasionally cougars, gray wolves, coyotes, and bears will also threaten them.

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Are able to take down prey animals eight times their own weight
- Can leap a distance of ten feet
- Good swimmers, but prefer to avoid the water
- Can spit, hiss, and purr like housecats
- The Shawnee American Indians have a tale that explains why the bobcat got its spots: After trapping the rabbit in a tree, the bobcat is persuaded to build a fire, only to have the embers scattered on its fur, leaving it tinged with dark brown spots.
- The Lynx constellation was so named because it was said to take the keen eyes of a lynx to see it [5].

Glossary: List of definitions of the most important recurrent technical terms used in the text.

Iteroparous - offspring are produced in groups (litters, clutches, etc.) of more than one at a time and across multiple seasons (or other periods hospitable to reproduction). The term iteroparity comes from the Latin *itero*, to repeat, and *pario*, to beget.

Ocelli – can be a simple eye, single lens, or false eye spot on an animal. Latin for 'little eye.' It is thought that 'eye spots' are used by mother felines to communicate with their kittens while hunting, making it easy for cubs to follow them in dense brush. Perked ears with fully visible ocelli mean 'follow me!' while flattened ears (and hidden ocelli) means 'get down!' or 'time to stalk!'

References

- [1] Wikipedia, "Bobcat," Wikipedia, 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bobcat>. [Accessed November 2014].
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- [3] Oregon Zoo, "Bobcat," Oregon Zoo, 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://www.oregonzoo.org/discover/animals/bobcat>. [Accessed November 2014].
- [4] Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, "Florida bobcat (*Lynx rufus floridanus*)," Virginia.gov, 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/information/?s=050052>. [Accessed November 2014].
- [5] San Diego Zoo, "Lynx," San Diego Zoo, 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://animals.sandiegozoo.org/animals/lynx-and-bobcat>.

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