

## **HUDSONIA HARLEM VALLEY BIODIVERSITY MANUAL SUPPLEMENT**

### **Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) scarce in region**

#### **Habitats in the Study Area**

Prefers terrain of variable topography with a mixture of wooded and open habitat, often at the foot of the mountains. Natural shelters (e.g. shrub thickets, dense conifers, rock ledges, talus) are important for denning, resting and concealment. In the Northeast bobcats occupy larger territories (10-150 km<sup>2</sup>) than in other parts of the species' range (McCord & Cardoza 1982). Consequently, in the study area bobcat is restricted to large areas with little or no development.

#### **Study Area Distribution**

Throughout, but more generally common in rugged uplands with metamorphic rock (e.g. Taconics, eastern Hudson Highlands). Occasionally a bobcat will show up almost anywhere (except in urban areas).

#### **Other Relevant Aspects of Ecological Niche and Behavior**

Most active at dusk and dawn, so seldom observed. Breeds once a year, in early spring. May travel up to 12 miles in one night (Whitaker and Hamilton 1998). Diet consists mostly of small mammals, especially rabbits, but larger prey (wild turkey, deer) and smaller prey (reptiles, amphibians and insects) are also taken (Hansen 2006). Carrion (e.g. deer remains) may be an important seasonal food source. In winter, often retreats to areas with dense conifers (spruce swamps, hemlock forest, juniper thickets, etc.) (McCord and Cardoza 1982.).

#### **Description and Identification**

Adult weight 6 to 15 kg, length 70 - 105 cm, with 11 - 19 cm tail, shoulder height 45 - 58 cm. Overall color reddish brown to light gray, with dark spots on legs and body, arranged in loose, rows similar to a "tiger" house cat. Undersides of body and short tail white. Face similar to domestic cat, but with beard-like ruff and black-tufted ears. White spots on back of ears signal other individuals within visual range.

#### **Threats and Conservation**

Adult bobcats have no major predators, but cubs may be killed by foxes, owls and adult male bobcats (Whitaker and Hamilton 1998). Habitat destruction and fragmentation are the main threats in our region. Rising pelt prices in the 1980s led to increased hunting and trapping of this species, but more so in the southeastern states (where populations are higher) than in the Northeast. More recently, taking of bobcats for pelts has declined (Scheiff & Baker 1987, Nowell & Jackson 1996). Bobcats that enter residential areas are frequently killed by people who fear them, though they are not a threat to humans (Kiviat & Outlaw 1983). Preservation of large areas of suitable habitat, and strict enforcement of hunting and trapping limits are essential to conservation of this species.

#### **Survey Technique Constraints**

Crepuscular (dusk/dawn) activity cycle, rugged habitat, low density (in Northeast) and secretive habits combine to make bobcat difficult to detect. Tracks left in mud or snow indicate this species' presence in an area, and can sometimes lead to dens or resting sites. Bobcat scat has a distinctive "cat box"-like odor,

whereas coyote scat is much less musky-smelling; bobcat scat tends to be even in diameter, segmented, and not pointed at the end. (Halfpenny and Biesiot 1988).

### References to Identification Literature

Reid, F. 2006. A Field Guide to Mammals of North America North of Mexico, Fourth Edition. Houghton Mifflin. Boston, New York. 579 p.

Halfpenny, J., and E. Biesiot, 1988. Field Guide to the Mammal Tracking in North America. Johnson Publishing Co. Chicago, IL. 176 p.

Murie, O.J., M. Elbroch and R.T. Peterson. 2005. Peterson Field Guide to Animal Tracks, Third Edition. Houghton Mifflin. Boston, New York. 432 p.

### References cited

Hansen, K. 2006. Bobcat: Master of Survival. Oxford University Press. Boston, MA. 248 p.

Kiviat, E. and D. Outlaw. 1983. Dutchess County's bobcats. Hudson Valley Studies (Bard College): 28-30.

McCord, C.M. and Cardoza, J.E. 1982. Bobcat and lynx. Pp 728-766 in J.A. Chapman and G.A. Feldhamer, eds. Wild mammals of North America: Biology, Management and Economics. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. 1368 p.

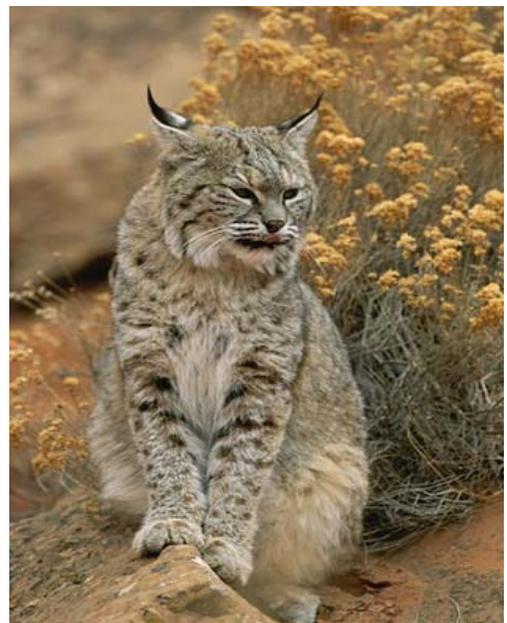
Nowell, K. and P. Jackson, eds. 1996. Wild cats: status survey and conservation action plan. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland. 406 pp, 48 color plates.

Shieff, A. and Baker, J. 1987. Marketing and international fur markets. Pp 862-877 in M. Novak, J. Baker, M. Obbard and B. Malloch, eds. Wild Furbearer Management and Conservation in North America. Ministry of Natural Resources, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Whitaker, J.O. and W.J. Hamilton. 1998. Mammals of the eastern United States, third edition. Cornell University Press. Ithaca, NY. 583 p.



Photo © Erik Kiviat



Photograph © Norbert Rosing