

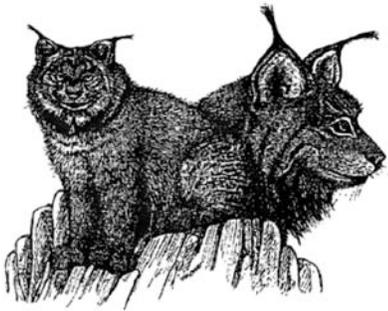
Canada Lynx

Lynx canadensis

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Fact Sheet

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USDA-Forest Service
drawing by
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Canada Lynx

Official Status: Threatened.

Threatened species are species that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

Listed

Federal Register Volume 63, No. 58, March 24, 2000.

Historical Status

The Canada lynx once occupied 16 of the contiguous United States (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado) as well as present day range in mountainous and boreal forest habitats throughout Canada and Alaska.

Present Status

Small populations of lynx remain in only three of the 16 contiguous states originally inhabited: Montana, Washington, and Maine. If lynx still exist in any of the other lower 48 states, they are very rare.

Habitat

In the western United States, lynx are found above 4,000 feet in moist coniferous forests that have cold, snowy winters, and support the primary prey base: snowshoe hares. The sub-alpine fir zone, dominated by cover types of spruce0fir, Douglas fir,

and seral lodgepole pine, is the primary vegetation type occupied. Cedar-hemlock forests may also be important. Mature forests with downed logs and windfalls provide cover for denning, escape, and protection from severe weather. Landscapes with a variety of forest age classes and cover types support large numbers of snowshoe hares for lynx foraging. Recent burns and cutting units may provide herbaceous summer foods for snowshoe hares and older, regenerating burns and cutting units provide woody browse for winter snowshoe hare populations. Cold, dry snow conditions give lynx a competitive advantage with their long legs and large feet, which act as snowshoes.



Historic range of Canada lynx in the contiguous United States



Approximate current range of Canada lynx in the contiguous United States

Life History

Mating occurs through March and April; kittens are born during May and June after a 62-day gestation period. Litter size averages 2 (1-4). Yearling females may produce a litter when pretty (snowshoe hare) is abundant. Lynx are very secretive, nocturnal and solitary. Home range size ranges from 5-94 miles, depending on prey abundance. Population rise and fall with snowshoe hare



population cycles. Starvation of kittens and trapping are probably the most significant mortality factors. Red squirrels, small rodents, grouse, porcupines, and beaver are alternate prey taken increasingly as snowshoe hare populations decline.

Aid to Identification

The Canada lynx is a medium-sized cat with proportionately long legs and large feet. There are long tufts of hair on the ear tips. The tail is very short with a solid black top. Total length ranges from 28 to 37 inches; weight from 18 to 23 pounds. The lynx has lighter, less spotted fur when compared to a bobcat.

Reasons for Decline

Over-trapping in the 1980's caused significant declines in lynx populations. Habitat fragmentation from development and urbanization, fire suppression, and some forest management practices can reduce habitat suitability. Increased winter recreation has provided packed snow trails which allow coyotes and bobcats to compete with lynx.

Recommendations

Contact an NRCS biologist while planning forest management activities in Canada lynx habitat. Report lynx sightings to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Comments

Forest management activities can be designed to address habitat needs of lynx and prey species such as snowshoe hare and red squirrels. Some important considerations include the retention of live trees and downed logs, cutting unit size and shape, and providing high densities of conifer saplings and shrubs that protrude through the snow cover.

References

Ruediger et. al. 2000. Canada lynx conversation assessment and strategy. USDA-Forest Service, USDA-Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA-Bureau of Land Management, and USDI-National Park Service, Missoula, Montana.

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