



# Rare Wildlife of New Hampshire

## Canada Lynx

*Lynx canadensis*

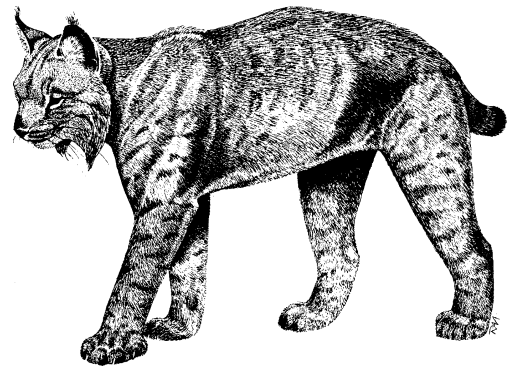
NEW HAMPSHIRE: ENDANGERED

UNITED STATES: POTENTIAL CANDIDATE FOR LISTING

### How does it look and behave?

Nearly 3 feet long and weighing 15-30 pounds, the Canada lynx is more than double the size of a large house cat. The female is somewhat smaller than the male.

**Appearance:** The lynx has long, powerful legs and a short (<5"), stubbed, black-tipped tail. The thick, grayish brown winter fur molts to reddish brown in summer. Prominent ear tufts, long hairs forming sideburns, and large eyes characterize its face. The paws are broad with furry toes, creating a snowshoe effect that facilitates travel over deep snow. Lynx tracks are roundish, slightly asymmetrical, rarely show claw marks, and show 4 toes. A front paw print measures more than 3 inches by 3 inches.



**Behavior:** Active year-round, the Canada lynx is usually silent and solitary. Lynx have a poor sense of smell, but remarkable eyesight that is well adapted for night hunting. Lynx scent-mark their territories to avoid interactions with other lynx. Their home range is 6-8 square miles, although lynx will travel longer distances when prey is scarce. Snowshoe hare is their staple food. Lynx populations follow fluctuations in the hare population, with peaks every 9-10 years.

**Breeding:** Lynx come together during late winter to breed. One to 4 kittens are born in late spring in a rock crevice or thicket.

### Where is it found?

**Habitat:** Lynx are associated with boreal forests undisturbed by humans. They inhabit dense, mature forests with vertical and horizontal structural diversity including large woody debris. Rock piles, upturned trees, hollow logs, and dense thickets are used as den sites. Since lynx depend on snowshoe hare for prey, it is assumed that good snowshoe hare habitat is good lynx foraging habitat. Diverse forest with alternate stands of conifer for cover and shrubby openings for feeding are preferred by snowshoe hare. Lynx avoid large, open areas, although they may occasionally visit nearby farmland.



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**Range:** Historically lynx ranged from Alaska and Canada south into the northern U.S. Today, lynx are restricted to parts of Washington, Montana, Idaho, and northern New York, although they're still widespread in the north woods of Canada and Alaska. Lynx are rarely sighted in New England. In New Hampshire, occasional signs of lynx are documented in the White Mountain National Forest.

### What are the management opportunities?

The two most important management goals for lynx are to avoid or minimize human disturbance in lynx habitat and to create suitable habitat for snowshoe hare, their major prey.

Foresters, landowners, and other land managers can follow these specific management recommendations:

- Minimize human disturbance in areas where lynx have been sighted or are likely to occur. Continued expansion of recreational activity, roads, and other disturbance in potential lynx habitat will likely hamper lynx recovery.
- Create habitat for snowshoe hare which includes base cover, travel cover, and a food source. Dense softwood stands with tree heights of 8-15 feet and low lateral visibility is good base cover. Travel cover includes tree heights of 15-46 feet with a more open understory. Small patch cuts (1/4 to 1/2 acre) scattered among this cover will provide an herbaceous food source for hare. Within a 20-acre management area maintain 30% base cover, 45% travel cover, 10% herbaceous food source, and 15% regeneration.
- Maintain a mix of coarse woody debris including fallen trees, large hollow logs and stumps for den and rest sites in mature softwood and mixed wood stands. Fire, epidemics of forest disease, and logging can provide dead and downed wood for lynx to use as den sites.
- Maintain a mosaic of mature conifer (spruce-fir, hemlock, or cedar) interspersed with patches of young forest with dense understory. Frequent, small scale disturbances can create suitable habitat.
- Clear-cuts greater than 100 yards wide create barriers to lynx movement and prevent re-colonization by hares for 6-7 years.

### What should you do if you see evidence of a lynx?

Record the time, date, where you observed the animal, what it was doing, and any other significant observations. Report the sighting to New Hampshire Fish & Game Department, Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, 2 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301 or call (603) 271-2462.

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