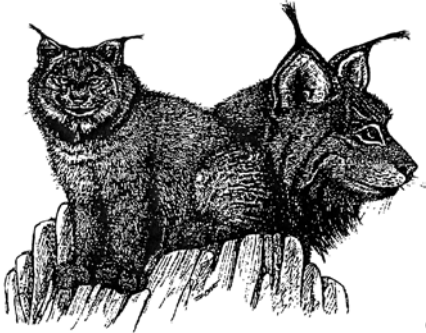


Threatened and Endangered Species

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Montana

CANADA LYNX *Lynx canadensis*



USDA-Forest Service
drawing by
Cherie Ziebart

Canada Lynx

OFFICIAL STATUS: **Threatened—Montana.**

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, 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 subalpine fir zone, dominated by cover types of spruce-fir, 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.

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 prey (snowshoe hare) is abundant. Lynx are very secretive, nocturnal and solitary. Home range size ranges from 5–94 miles, depending on prey abundance. Populations 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 tip. Total length ranges from 28 to 37 inches; weight from 18 to 23 pounds. The lynx has a 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 allows 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 conservation assessment and strategy. USDA–Forest Service, USDI–Fish and Wildlife Service, USDI–Bureau of Land Management and USDI–National Park Service, Missoula, Montana.



Historic range of Canada lynx in the contiguous United States



Approximate current range of Canada lynx in the contiguous United States