

GUIDE TO THE OUTDOORS FROM THE SHERIFF'S POSSE



By Mark Rackay

The Canadian Lynx

Last October, there was a lynx sighting on the old LaVeta pass trail. The encounter lasted just long enough for the lucky person to catch a quick photo. It was later submitted to the Colorado Parks

Pictured above is a Lynx. Pictured above at top right is a bobcat. Know the difference. Courtesy photos.

and Wildlife, CPW, as a sighting.

In December of 2016, the Durango Herald reported that Dontje Hildebrand was fortunate enough to spot a pair of lynx, just off US Highway 550 near the passes.

The State of Colorado is home to more than 960 species of wildlife, and one of the rarest to see is the lynx. With all of the time I spend in the high country, I have never seen a lynx in Colorado.

The Canadian lynx, also known as a snow cat, had completely disappeared from Colorado by the early 1970's. Sightings prior to that had become a very rare occurrence and were scattered about various mountainous areas of the state.

In 2000, the Canadian lynx was officially listed as threatened by the federal Endangered Species Act. It was entirely possible that the lynx could be moved to endangered at any time.

In 1999, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, then known as the Division of Wildlife, launched a bold plan to help the lynx. The CPW began a reintroduction program in our state. CPW reintroduced a total of 218 lynx from 1999 to 2006 in the San Juan Mountains of the southwest portion of Colorado.

The lynx were captured in Alaska and Canada and many were monitored with radio and satellite collars. The lynx has become very adept at adjusting to Colorado's mountains and has been continually expanding its range.

By 2010, CPW had concluded that Colorado-born lynx had successfully produced third-generation Colorado kittens. In 2010, researchers estimated that between 30 and 40 percent of female lynx bore litters of kittens. The lynx breed in the winter and have a gestation period of around nine weeks. The female will have a litter of about three or four kittens in April or May.

The lynx is a large and bob-tailed cat, reaching more than three feet in length and weighing in around 30 pounds. The most noticeable features are the incredible ear tufts, which may be as long as the cat's actual ears.

A lynx does appear similar to the bobcat. Bobcats are listed as a furbearer in Colorado, so you can hunt and trap them within the regulations. You must exercise great care so as not to confuse a lynx with a bobcat.

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Bobcats are somewhat smaller and not as tall as a lynx. The bobcat has a reddish color fur and the spots are more prominent, while a lynx appears more grayish. A lynx's tail has a solid black tip, while a bobcat's tail has a black tip broken with a reddish band. Bobcats do not have that beautiful ear tuft that the lynx has.

The country the lynx lives in is also home to the snowshoe hare, which is the favorite food of the lynx, making up about two thirds of their diet. The lynx will also dine on red squirrels and the occasional grouse.

The reintroduction of the lynx to Colorado has been a major success story for the CPW, as the population appears stable. The plan CPW used has become a model for other species reintroductions in other states.

Sighting a lynx is such a rare occurrence that CPW wants to hear from you whenever you see one. CPW has a special form on their website at www.cpw.state.co.us



In 1999, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, then known as the Division of Wildlife, launched a bold plan to help the lynx. Courtesy photo.

that you can fill out to report a sighting. Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a Director and Public Information Officer for the Montrose County

Sheriff's Posse.

For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

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