

Life History of the Bobcat

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The bobcat belongs to the family Felidae, which contains mountain lion, Florida panther, ocelot, lynx, jaguar, margay and jaguarundi. Historically the bobcat ranged throughout the lower 48 states and into parts of southern Canada and northern Mexico. Bobcats are found throughout Alabama with greater abundance in the Coastal Plains and Piedmont areas.



DESCRIPTION: The bobcat is slightly more than twice the size of a domestic cat. Adult males' weight ranges between 16-40 pounds and the females between 8-33 pounds. Coloration can vary but generally is yellowish or reddish brown streaked or spotted black or dark brown. The belly and underside of the tail is white. Black spots or bars are found on the belly and inside the forelegs and may extend up the sides to the back. Their tail is short ($5 \frac{3}{4}$ inches) with distinct black bars at the tip.

REPRODUCTION: Bobcats normally breed once a year from January through March with most births occurring during April and May. After a gestation period of 62 days, a litter of 1-4 kittens is born with 3 kittens being the average litter size.

HABITAT: Bobcats are highly adapted to a variety of habitats. They prefer forested habitats with a dense understory and high prey densities. The only habitat type not used is heavily farmed agriculture land. Bobcats are territorial and readily defend their home range. Their home range can vary from 1-80 square miles. Bobcats may use a variety of denning sites such as rock ledges, hollow trees and logs, and brush piles. Prey abundance, protection from weather and disturbance, resting areas, denning sites and cover are all essential habitat components for bobcats.

DIET: Bobcats are highly carnivorous with over 95% of their diet meat. They are highly opportunistic, feeding on what is available. The bulk of their diet tends to be mammalian prey, primarily rabbits and rodents such as cotton rats. However, they will prey on insects, reptiles, amphibians, and birds.

Photo Credit: Gary M. Stolz, USFWS



This information is provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission

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