

Bobcat or Lynx

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Know the Difference between a Bobcat and a Lynx

Bobcats are common in almost all habitats in New Mexico. Bobcats are closely related to the Canada lynx that inhabits the boreal forests of Canada and parts of the northern United States. Parts of northern New Mexico are classified as lynx range, and though there are no established populations here, transients may occasionally be observed.

A few key identification characteristics can help distinguish between a lynx and a bobcat:

Range: The only potential habitat for lynx is high elevation forests in the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Mountains. If you are not in this area, then you will not see a lynx.

Body characteristics: Lynx have much longer legs in comparison to their body size, almost like a bobcat on stilts. They have larger feet for running on top of snow, and the tufts on their ears are much longer – often two inches or greater.

Pelage (coat) patterns: The easiest way to distinguish a lynx from a bobcat, other than by its range, is the tail. Depicted in the pictures below, the tip of a bobcat's tail is black on top, and white on the bottom. In contrast, the tip of a lynx's tail is completely black. Another common difference, although there are exceptions, is lynx rarely have black spots or bars on the undersides and insides of their limbs.

There is no open season for Canada lynx in New Mexico. Any lynx caught while trapping in New Mexico must be released alive, and the incident must be reported to NMDOW within 24 hours. If you are not certain whether you have caught a bobcat or a lynx, please contact your local conservation officer or the NMDOW Furbearer Program: **505-257-8701**.



Left: Bobcat. NMDOW trail camera.

Right: Lynx. U.S. Forest Service photo.