

## Hunting and Feeding Habits

Bobcats are primarily crepuscular (twilight) hunters, but occasionally hunt during daylight. Bobcats are sight hunters, and in dim light the pupils of their eyes become large and round, aiding their ability to hunt.

Like most cats, bobcats hunt by stealth rather than pursuit and may wait patiently by a trail until prey passes nearby. Their diet consists of small and medium-sized prey, such as rabbits and other rodents, birds, reptiles or even insects. House pets, such as cats or small dogs, can fall prey to these predators, but Department of Game and Fish records indicate such attacks are uncommon.

## Habitat

Bobcats inhabit every county in New Mexico. This highly adaptable member of the cat family can range from sandy deserts in the lower Sonoran zone to high mountains in the alpine. Though elusive and difficult to observe, the bobcat's habitat can include lightly populated urban areas.

Unlike far-ranging cougars, bobcats seldom travel more than a few miles from home and adapt more easily to areas settled by humans. Even a wooded lot in an agricultural area can sustain a pair of bobcats.

It is common to encounter bobcats within residential areas where properties are xeriscaped to match the surrounding landscape, which can provide perfect bobcat habitat.

Because bobcats rarely venture far from where they are born, they may live their entire lives in close proximity to people. They often may act apathetic or even nonchalant when interacting with people. This behavior is common and sometimes can unnerve a concerned citizen who is expecting the bobcat to run away swiftly.



## New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

*Conserving New Mexico's Wildlife for Future Generations*

## Who Can You Call?

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish manages, conserves and protects wildlife within the state. Your concerns about wildlife are our concerns as well.

If you have a potentially life-threatening situation or suffer an injury from a carnivore, please contact us. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. After hours, contact the New Mexico State Police or your local sheriff's department. Sightings or encounters with carnivores are common, and you are not required to report them.

## Headquarters

One Wildlife Way, Santa Fe, NM 87507  
1-888-248-6866

## Regional Offices

Northwest Office  
3841 Midway Place NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109  
(505) 222-4700

Southwest Office  
2715 Northrise Drive, Las Cruces, NM 88011  
(575) 532-2100

Northeast Office  
215 York Canyon Road, Raton, NM 87740  
(575) 445-2311

Southeast Office  
1912 W. Second Street, Roswell, NM 88201  
(575) 624-6135

Cover photo by James Stuart. Inside: NMDGF photo by Dan Williams.



## New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

*Conserving New Mexico's Wildlife for Future Generations*

Know the facts about  
**Bobcats**

## Bobcat Facts

Bobcats and lynx are separate species but belong to the same genus. Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) are sometimes mistaken for lynx (*Lynx canadensis*). Bobcats are smaller and more compact, similar to the size of a large house cat. Bobcats are brownish in color with black spotted flanks, belly and legs and depending on habitat and light can have a gray coloration.

Though both animals have erect, tufted ears and a short tail, the bobcat's tufts are shorter and its tail is white underneath with black bars on top and a white tip. The lynx's tail has a black tip and no white underneath. Bobcats have small feet (up to 2-1/2 inches wide) while lynx have larger feet (3-1/2 to 4-1/2 inches wide) with longer hair.

Bobcats usually mate from February to March, but can mate anytime of the year. Gestation lasts about 60 days, and litters average two to three kittens. Newborns open their eyes in 10 days and are weaned at two months. It is during this period, when the kittens are too small to travel, the mother can be extremely aggressive and protective of her kittens. Kittens typically remain with the female for 8–12 months, after which they disperse and establish their own territories. Often a bobcat family will take up residence in an unoccupied property, and when an absentee landowner returns, he/she may be surprised to find new residents inside the carport, under the deck or behind the shed.

## Legal Status

Bobcats are protected furbearers in New Mexico with an established season for hunting and trapping from November 1 to March 15. New Mexico has provisions for landowners to control bobcats and other furbearers that are damaging property. If you encounter problems outside of the legal hunting and trapping season, before trapping or using lethal control methods on bobcats, raccoons or other furbearers you must check with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

## Reducing Bobcat Encounters

- Never approach a bobcat or bobcat kittens.
- Do not feed bobcats or wildlife and birds that might attract bobcats or other predators.
- Secure all possible food sources, including pet food and garbage.
- Keep small pets and livestock in enclosures that cannot be accessed by bobcats or other predators.
- Never leave small pets or livestock unattended outdoors or in screened enclosures.
- Always walk dogs on leashes so they cannot run free or out of sight.
- Trim excess vegetation that might provide stalking cover.
- Outdoor lighting can deter bobcats from hunting in yards.
- Rabbits are a primary prey for bobcats and may be legally trapped and relocated by landowners.
- Refrain from hiking or walking dogs at dusk or dawn, times when bobcats are most active
- Bobcats pose little threat to small children unless cornered or provoked. However, always supervise children outdoors.

## If You Have a Bobcat Encounter

- Back away slowly if the bobcat has not seen you. Talk loudly as you move away to make your presence known.
- Watch for bobcat kittens.
- Protect any children or pets.
- Do not run.
- Appear as large as possible.
- If attacked, fight back, using rocks, sticks or hands.
- If bitten by a bobcat, immediately contact the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and visit your nearest medical care facility. Bobcats can transmit rabies and plague which if contracted can be deadly to humans.
- Hike with bear pepper spray or a whistle to make noise.
- Try to photograph the bobcat if it is creating a nuisance or depredation issue on your property.
- Spotting a bobcat does not warrant capturing or relocating the animal. Such actions can potentially harm the bobcat. Generally, only complaints involving livestock depredation require trapping and relocating bobcats.
- Capture of a wild animal is always a last resort to be used after all other methods are exhausted.
- If capture becomes necessary, it is always the goal to catch only the offending animal.

