

BOBCAT STATUS & MANAGEMENT IN NYS



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

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Bobcats in New York

In the early 1900s, bobcats were restricted to the Adirondack, Catskill, and Taconic Mountains, areas that are still considered core bobcat range in New York. However, under careful management, bobcat populations have grown and expanded into central and western New York. Today, bobcats can be found throughout the state, except for Long Island. They are well-established in the Southern Tier, and populations are continuing to grow in the Lake Plains area. Although their elusive nature makes them difficult to spot, DEC has documented bobcats in every upstate NY county.

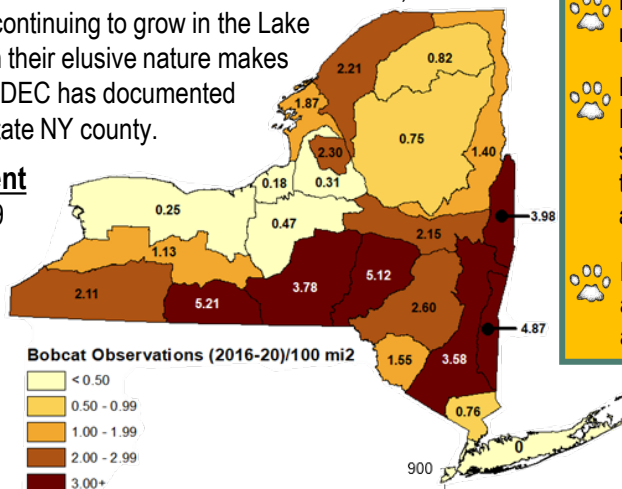
Bobcat Management

New York is one of 39 states with regulated hunting and trapping seasons for bobcats. Harvest is closely monitored and every bobcat taken must be reported and tagged by DEC personnel.

This process allows biologists to collect harvest and demographic information (i.e., sex and age of the animal) and better understand the population.

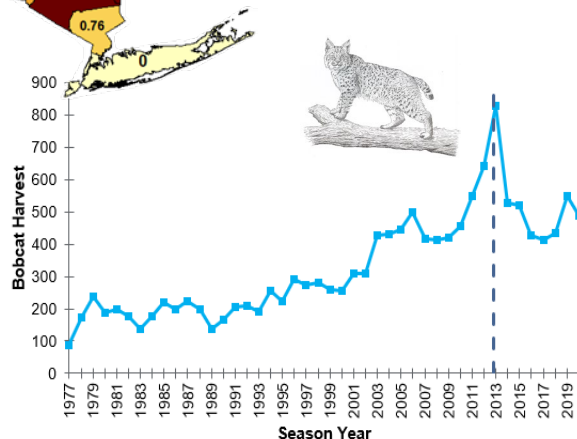
Since the 1970s, bobcat harvests and take-per-unit-effort increased significantly, indicating a growing population. High pelt prices and new harvest opportunities in central and western NY led to a peak in harvest in 2013. Since that time, bobcat harvest has varied annually but showed an overall stable trend at levels similar to those observed before the peak.

Harvest and observation trends all indicate a stable to growing bobcat population. DEC will be doing additional research over the next 2 years to improve our understanding of bobcat demographics and trends.



Bobcat Fast Facts

- Bobcats are medium-sized cats, generally weighing 10-25 pounds.
- They get their name from their short, bobbed tail.
- Bobcats are highly adaptable, ranging from Canada to Mexico.
- Bobcats are generalist carnivores. Preferred prey is rabbits and other small to medium mammals, though they also eat birds, deer, and even an occasional porcupine.
- Bobcats are most active at dawn and dusk, though they can be seen anytime day or night.



NY bobcat harvest from pelt seal data, 1977-2020. The dashed line highlights the 2013 season, when bobcat hunting and trapping opportunities increased with the opening of the Harvest Expansion Area and expansion of season dates in Northern NY.

MANAGEMENT GOALS

Goal 1

Maintain or enhance bobcat populations in all areas of the state where suitable habitat exists.

Goal 2

Provide for the sustainable use and enjoyment of bobcats by the public.

Goal 3

Ensure we are meeting the public desire for information about bobcats and their conservation, use, and enjoyment.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2024-2033 MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BOBCATS IN NY

This plan serves as an update to the expired 2012-2017 Management Plan. Since the publication of the previous plan, DEC has improved data collection and our understanding of bobcat populations by conducting an age-at-harvest analysis of bobcats in Central/Western NY, collecting hunter and trapper effort data to understand take-per-unit effort, and began collecting bobcat observations from the general public. This second edition plan outlines strategies to continue assessment of bobcat harvest trends and population indices and provides recommendations for future bobcat management in New York. The new plan proposes the following new strategies to better monitor bobcat status, distribution, and population trends:

- Develop and implement a targeted survey to determine bobcat density and occupancy in New York, with a focus on central and western New York.
- Develop a population model that incorporates harvest-independent and harvest-dependent data to estimate population trends at relevant management scales.

Bobcats investigating DEC survey stations, summer 2023.



Since 2013, nearly 2,500 individuals have enjoyed the opportunity to harvest a bobcat in New York. To ensure that the bobcat harvest remains sustainable with stable or growing populations, DEC will closely monitor the bobcat harvest by following the steps below:

- Require that all bobcats harvested be reported and have DEC staff continue to tag all harvested bobcats.
- Opportunistically collect carcasses of harvested bobcats for at least 3 years to better estimate bobcat reproduction, population age structure, and the sex ratio of harvested populations.
- Survey furbearer hunters & trappers to annually estimate take-per-unit-effort for bobcats.
- Establish criteria to guide recommendations for modifying existing opportunities or opening new areas to bobcat harvest.

Bobcats are a charismatic species that are highly valued by many different groups in New York. DEC will follow the steps below to ensure we are meeting the public desire for information about bobcats and their conservation, use, and enjoyment:

- Conduct outreach to increase public understanding, appreciation, and support of bobcats as a sustainable wildlife resource.
- Conduct a survey to evaluate the satisfaction of bobcat harvesters, wildlife enthusiasts, and the public regarding bobcat management.
- Compile information on bobcat-human interactions and develop guidelines for avoiding conflicts