

# HOW TO AVOID INCIDENTAL TAKE OF LYNX

*While Trapping Other Furbearers*



Updated September 2015 - with **NEW REGULATIONS**

\*Includes Quick Reference Guide

**Some modifications specific to Maine were made to this USFWS/AFWA publication by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) with permission from USFWS/AFWA.**

The purpose of this publication is to help reduce capture, injury and mortality to the Federally Threatened Canada lynx population in the contiguous United States, which may occur as a result of hunting or trapping bobcats and other furbearers. This pamphlet was produced as a joint effort between the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA, formerly known as the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, IAFWA).

The mission of the USFWS is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies represents North America's fish and wildlife agencies to advance sound, science-based management and conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats in the public interest.

**Front Cover:**

**Lynx**

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

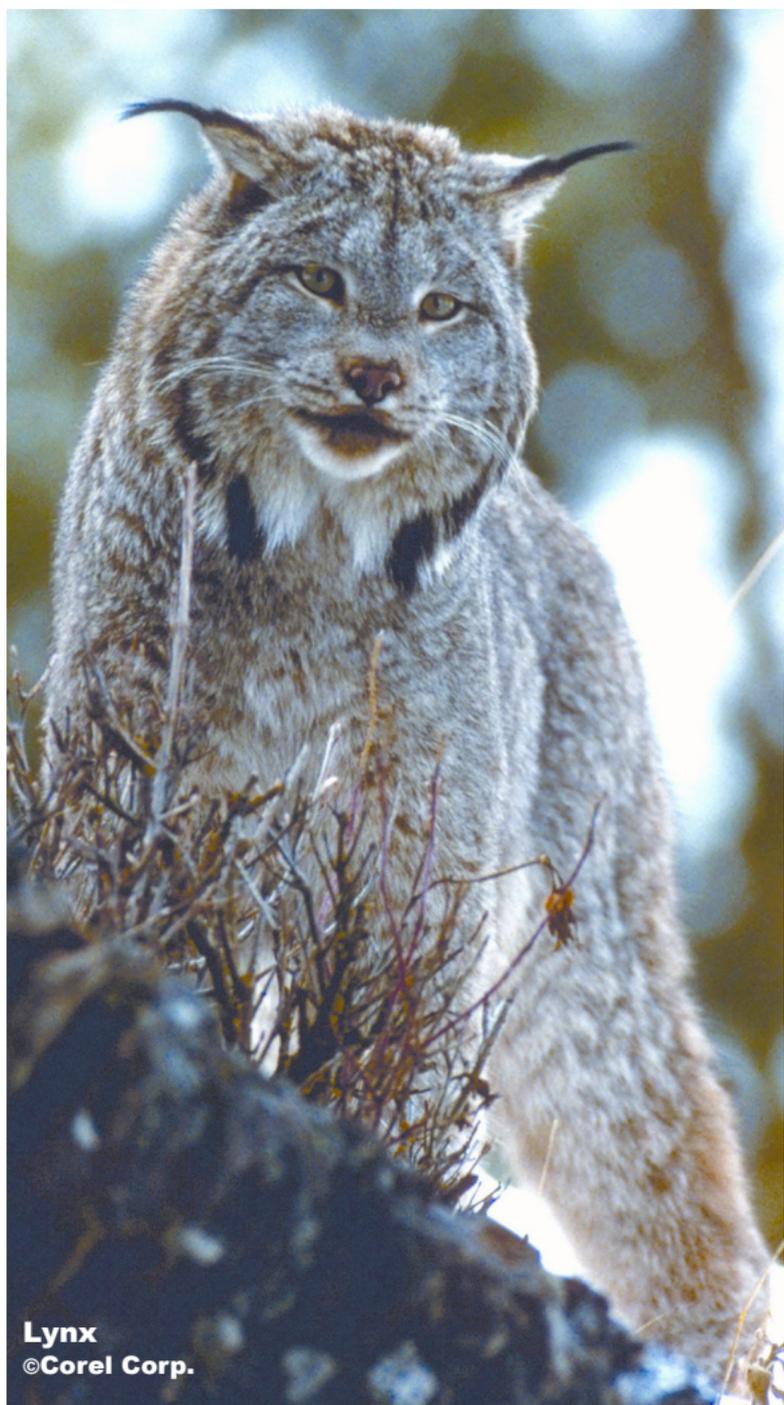
# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Primary authors Howard Golden, Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Tom Krause, National Trappers Association wish to recognize the significant efforts of Gordon R. Batcheller, New York State Division of Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources and Lori Nordstrom, USFWS Montana Field Office.

Additionally, the input received from the following reviewers was greatly appreciated:

Jerry Apker	Carter Niemeyer
Ted N. Bailey	John Olson
Ed Bangs	Paul O'Neil
Ed Bogges	Eric Orff
Larry D. Cooper	John Organ
Larry Dickerson	Gina Patton
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Matula	Donald J. Wilda
Mark McCollough	Mike Wolfe
Wayne Melquist	

With permission, MDIFW modified the original document published in 2003 by the USFWS and IAFWA. This booklet reflects Maine's trapping regulations and habitat conditions. MDIFW biologists Jennifer Vashon, Shannon Crowley and Scott McLellan contributed to the modification of the brochure in 2005. **The 2015 update reflects recently adopted trapping regulations to minimize the take of lynx in traps and was adapted by MDIFW biologists Jennifer Vashon and Cory Mosby.**



**Lynx**  
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# HOW TO AVOID INCIDENTAL TAKE OF LYNX

## *While Trapping or Hunting Bobcats and other Furbearers*

Canada lynx were listed by the USFWS as Federally Threatened in the contiguous United States under the Endangered Species Act on March 24, 2000. As such, harvesting lynx is no longer permitted in any state except Alaska. In the contiguous United States, lynx may occur in Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

The harvest of bobcats and other furbearers, whether by trapping or hunting, is not affected by this ruling. Trappers and hunters must use every reasonable effort to avoid taking lynx where they may occur in the contiguous 48 states.

Lynx are very similar in appearance and habits to bobcats. Lynx are also found where bobcats and other furbearers occur. Therefore, it is important for trappers and hunters to know how to distinguish lynx from bobcats, to recognize their preferred habitat types, and to avoid capturing or harvesting lynx. Trappers must also learn what to do if a lynx is caught incidentally.

# Identifying Characteristics and Background Information

## *Description*

Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) are medium-sized wild cats. Adult males are usually larger than females in both species. Bobcats are usually heavier than lynx; however, lynx may appear larger due to longer legs and larger feet. Bobcat weights range from 12 - 68 pounds (average 28 lb) for males and 9 - 34 pounds (average 15 lb) for females. Lynx weights range from 16 - 31 pounds (average 24 lb) for males and 16 - 23 pounds (average 20 lb) for females.

Lynx have ear tufts and facial ruffs on their cheeks that are larger and more prominent than those on bobcats. Ear tufts are usually longer than 1 inch on lynx but shorter than 1 inch on bobcats. Bobcat and lynx tails are approximately 4 – 6 inches long and match their pelt color except for the tip (about the last inch of the tail). The tip of the tail on bobcats is usually black on the upper side and white underneath, whereas on lynx the entire tip is black.

Bobcat pelts may be light gray, yellowish brown, buff, brown, or reddish brown and streaked or spotted with black or dark brown. Under portions of the body are white with black spots and with black bars on the fore legs. Lynx generally have more gray and less red in their pelts than bobcats and the belly fur is grayish- white or buff-white with mottled, indistinct black spots.



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**Belly Markings**

*In contrast to the western United States and New Brunswick, bobcats in Maine are more difficult to distinguish from lynx based on pelt color. Spots on the belly of lynx (left) are slightly more mottled than bobcat (right) and belly hair is generally not as white as bobcat's. Bobcats have more red and brown coloration to their coats.*



*Note the foot size and color differences between lynx (left) and bobcat (right).*

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*Lynx tails appear much the same when viewed from the top (left). The tip of the tail on a lynx (left) is completely black, while bobcat tails show black bars with a white tip when viewed from above (right).*



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*Lynx tails appear much different when viewed from the bottom (left). The tip of the tail on a lynx is completely black, while bobcat tails show a lot of white underneath (right).*

The hind legs of both bobcats and lynx are longer than their front legs, which helps them to spring and catch prey. However, the hind legs are even more disproportionately large on lynx, causing them to have a “stooped” appearance. Lynx also have much larger feet than bobcats.



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**Top Left:**

*Bobcats usually have ear tufts shorter than 1 inch.*

**Top Right:**

*Heavily furred bobcats might appear lynx-like, with significant ear tufts and facial ruffs.*

**Left:**

*Lynx usually have ear tufts longer than 1 inch and more distinct facial ruffs.*

## *Sign*

In deep snow, lynx tracks are generally less distinct than bobcat tracks, since lynx toe pads are not visible as a result of abundant foot hair. However, in wet or compacted snow, lynx toe pads are visible, which can be confused with bobcat tracks. In these situations, stride or track size will help discern lynx from bobcat. Back feet often follow in the front foot tracks of both species. When walking, the stride (measured as the distance between footprints of the opposite foot) is 11 - 18 inches for lynx and 6 - 14 inches for bobcats.



©Mark Elbroch

*A set of lynx tracks in snow.*



©Mark Elbroch

*A set of bobcat tracks in snow.*

# Quick Reference

*(Pull-Out Section: Pages 11-14)*

## TRAPPING REGULATIONS TO AVOID INCIDENTAL TAKE OF LYNX

**STATEWIDE:** Remember anytime you are trapping, bait (i.e. meat, feathers, bone, fur or other animal matter) within 50 yards of your trap can only be used if it is completely covered from above and in a way to withstand wind action. Because bobcats cannot be harvested during the early coyote/fox season, other visual attractors such as flagging cannot be used during that season.

### **FOOTHOLD TRAPS set on land**

#### **STATEWIDE**

- Must have 3 swiveling points on trap chains: 1 at the base of the trap, 1 at the anchor, and 1 midway in the chain
- Chain must be mounted to the central portion of the trap

#### **LYNX ZONE: WMD 1-11, 14, 18, and 19**

- Use of drags are prohibited
- Traps must be securely anchored and include the chain described above
- Catch circle must be clear of woody vegetation or debris except small sticks and rocks or rotten wood used as backing, guides, or blocking
- Catch circle is defined as the area marked by the outer edge of the trap when the trap and the chain are fully extended in a circle around the anchor point

**Foothold traps set on land** in WMDs 1-6 and 8-11 can NOT have an inside jaw spread greater than 5 3/8"

*Pull-Out Section*

## **KILLER-TYPE TRAPS set on land**

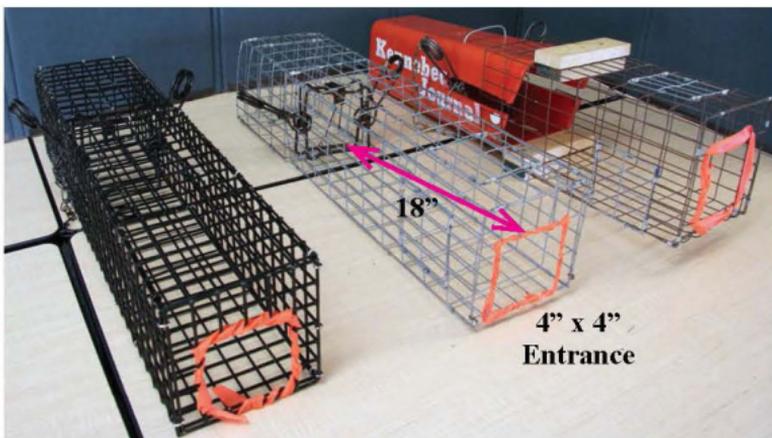
### **STATEWIDE: Must have a lynx exclusion device**

With the exception of blind sets and sets under overhanging banks. Please see the Trapping and Hunting Laws and Rules booklet for details.

- Lynx exclusion devices can be made of wire, wood, and/or plastic and must be constructed to withstand pulling & prying
- If wire mesh is used, it cannot exceed 1.5 x 1.5 or 1 x 2 inch mesh and the wire must be 16-gauge or smaller (wire diameter of 0.05 inches or greater)

A Lynx Exclusion Device for killer-type traps with a jawspread of 5 inches or less (e.g. marten trapping)

- The entrance hole cannot exceed 4 x 4 inches
- The trap must be a minimum of 18 inches from the nearest edge of the entrance hole
- Entrance hole can be at the end, on the side or top of the exclusion device
- A baffle is not required since the entrance is no more than 4 x 4 inches



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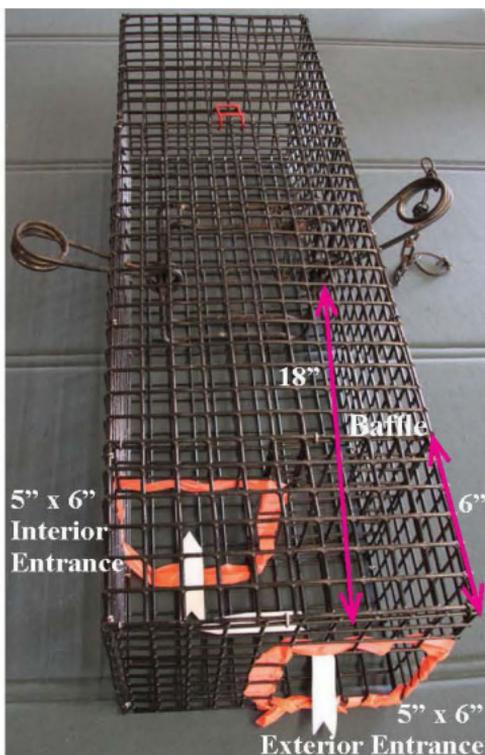
*Flagging in this photo is used to illustrate the location of the entrance and is not required.*

*Pull-Out Section*

Lynx Exclusion Device for killer-type traps with a jawsread greater than 5 inches and less than 8 inches (e.g. fisher/raccoon trapping)

**Design 1:**

- An entrance hole set on the end of the device cannot exceed 5 x 6 inches
- The trap must be a minimum of 18 inches from the nearest edge of the entrance hole
- The device must include a baffle
- A baffle must be placed no more than 6 inches from the entrance hole
- The interior entrance created by the baffle cannot exceed 5 x 6 inches and must not overlap with the exterior entrance



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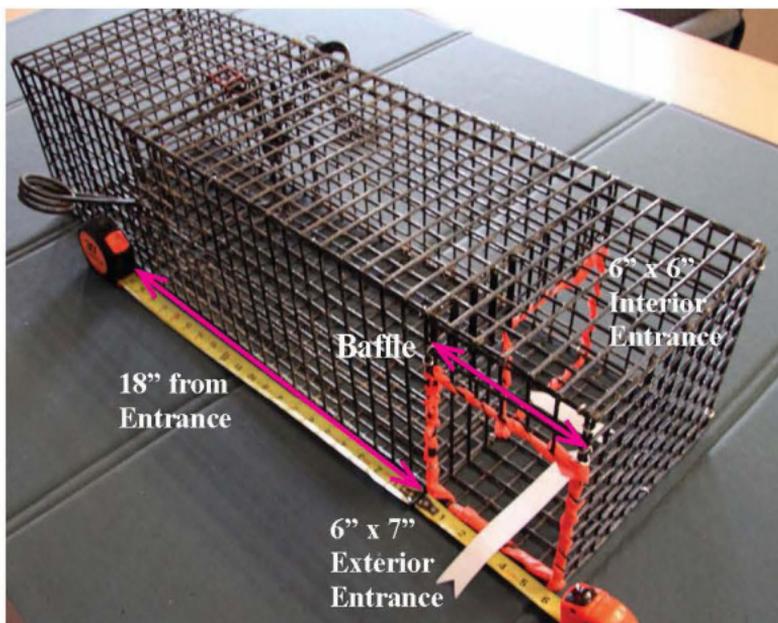
*Flagging illustrates the location of the entrance hole.*

*Pull-Out Section*

Lynx Exclusion Device for killer-type traps with a jawspread greater than 5 inches and less than 8 inches (e.g. fisher/raccoon trapping)

**Design 2:**

- An entrance hole set on the side of the device cannot exceed 6 x 7 inches
- The trap must be a minimum of 18 inches from the nearest edge of the entrance hole
- The device must include a baffle
- A baffle must be placed at the edge of the entrance with the baffle opening on the opposite side of the entrance hole
- The interior opening created by the baffle cannot exceed 6 x 6 inches



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*Flagging in this photo is used to illustrate the location of the entrance and is not required.*

To learn more about lynx exclusion devices, visit:  
[www.maine.gov/ifw/hunting\\_trapping/index.htm](http://www.maine.gov/ifw/hunting_trapping/index.htm)

*Pull-Out Section*

## Distinguishing Characteristics of Lynx and Bobcat

	<b>Lynx</b>	<b>Bobcat</b>
<b>Ear Tufts</b>	Generally greater than 1"	Generally less than 1"
<b>Facial Ruffs</b>	Larger facial ruffs with black banding at outer edges	Smaller facial ruffs with less distinct banding on outer edge
<b>Pelt Color</b>	More uniform coat color. Generally grey pelt including the back of the hind legs. Belly fur greyish white with some black spots.	Reddish brown pelt with distinctive dark brown fur along the back of the hind legs. Belly fur white with distinct black spots.
<b>Tail Color</b>	Generally matches body color except the entire tip (about the last 1") is black	Usually has dark bars and the tip of the tail is black on upper side but is white on underside
<b>Feet</b>	Large and snowshoe-like feet and hind legs are longer than the front, giving a "stooped" appearance	Smaller feet (proportional to body) and hind legs are not as long as lynx
<b>Track Size</b>	<p><b><u>In dirt:</u></b> up to 3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" wide x 3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" long</p> <p><b><u>In snow:</u></b> up to 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" wide x 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" long</p> <p>Stride: 11 - 18"</p>	<p><b><u>In dirt:</u></b> up to 2 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" wide x 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" long</p> <p><b><u>In snow:</u></b> up to 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" wide x 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" long</p> <p>Stride: 6 - 14"</p>

## Lynx



- \* longer ear tufts (1" or longer)
- \* longer facial ruff
- \* shorter and completely black-tipped tail
- \* large and well-furred feet (>3" track)
- \* uniform coat color
- \* buff-colored hind foot

## Bobcat

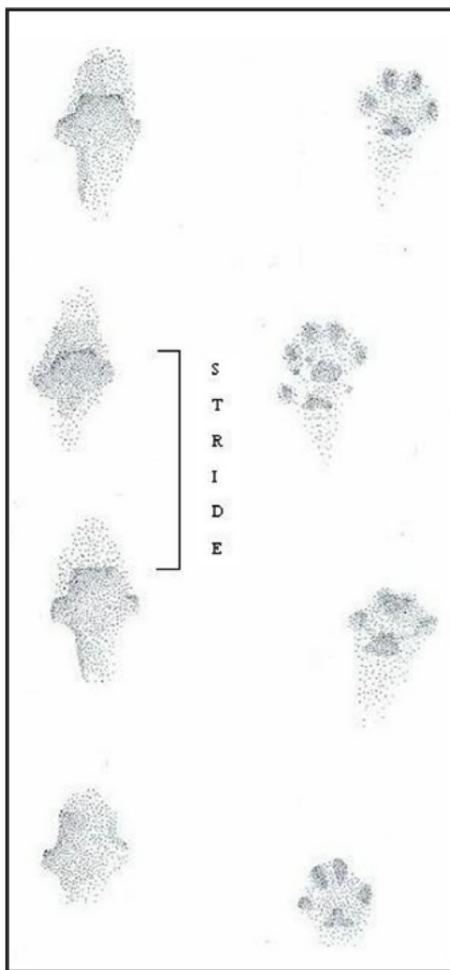


- \* shorter ear tufts (absent to 1")
- \* shorter facial ruff - more round face
- \* tail black-tipped on top and white underneath
- \* smaller feet (2" track)
- \* less-uniform coat (white underbelly, spotted)
- \* chocolate brown along back of hind foot

Both bobcat and lynx leave track that tend to “wander” compared with the more straight-line patterns of wild canids (foxes, coyotes, and wolves). Lynx and bobcats travel and hunt with a deliberate and methodical walking pattern, rarely bounding unless chasing prey.

**In dirt**, lynx tracks are approximately  $3 \frac{1}{4}$  -  $3 \frac{3}{4}$  inches long and 3 -  $3 \frac{3}{8}$  inches wide and **in snow** up to  $5 \frac{1}{2}$  inches long and  $5 \frac{1}{2}$  inches wide.

**In dirt**, bobcat tracks are approximately  $1 \frac{7}{8}$  -  $2 \frac{1}{2}$  inches long and  $1 \frac{7}{8}$  -  $2 \frac{5}{8}$  inches wide and **in snow** up to  $2 \frac{1}{2}$  inches long and  $2 \frac{1}{2}$  inches wide. Both bobcats and lynx have 4 toe pads on the front and hind feet. Claw marks typically do not show as they do with canids.



©Mark Elbroch  
Canada lynx  
walking in deep  
fluffy snow.

Canada lynx  
walking in  
shallow snow.

## ***Life History and Diet***

Lynx normally breed between March and April while bobcats breed between February and March. The snowshoe hare is by far the most important prey item for lynx. The availability of hares largely controls lynx abundance across most of their range. Other prey species important to lynx are red squirrels, mice, other rodents, and birds. Bobcat diets are more varied and can consist of snowshoe hare, mice, cottontail rabbits, other rodents, birds, and deer.

## ***Habitat Preferences***

Lynx and bobcats prefer areas with high prey abundance and dense understory vegetation. Habitat types preferred by lynx range from mature coniferous forests to coniferous or mixed forests that are regenerating. Forests that are growing back after fire or logging often provide excellent food and cover for hares and therefore attract lynx. It is extremely rare for lynx to be found in meadows, pastures or farmland habitats. Bobcats use similar habitats as lynx but are also commonly found in meadows, pastures, farmland, mixed and hardwood forests. Both lynx and bobcats seem to use the convenience of logging roads in forests to aid in travel.

## ***Distribution***

Lynx are primarily found in northern & western Maine, but also eastern Maine. Lynx are rare or absent in central and coastal areas. Bobcats are more common in western, central, and Downeast and are rarer in northern Maine due to increased snow depths.

## Bobcat Hunting Methods to Help Avoid Taking Lynx

Tracks should be closely examined and measured before any trailing dogs are released. (See “*Sign*” section, page 10). Any treed bobcat should be carefully identified and confirmed to not be a lynx before it is harvested. A treed lynx should be abandoned immediately with harnessed dogs in tow.

If hunting in areas lynx may frequent, it is essential to properly identify any animal to ensure a lynx is not shot. Since it may be difficult or impossible to positively identify an animal as a lynx or bobcat, it is best not to shoot at all whenever positive identity is unknown. Hunters always bear the risk of loss of legitimate prey to avoid the risk of shooting a lynx.



Roger W. Barbour

### **Bobcat**

*Note shorter eartufts, smaller feet, and tail coloration.*

# Trapping Methods to Help Avoid Catching Lynx

To avoid lynx while trapping bobcats, trap sets should be made where bobcats are known to exist. Trap set locations that tend to avoid lynx include open meadows, pastures and crop lands. Lynx rarely use agricultural lands and generally prefer to hunt and travel in forested or brushy areas.

Rabbits, hares, or parts of rabbits or hares should not be used for bait if lynx may frequent an area. During the bobcat trapping season, flagging should not be used as a visual attractor near traps if lynx are present.

Lynx often avoid traps set for foxes and coyotes when the traps are placed in open fields. The use of tainted, rather than fresh meat baits, tends not to attract lynx while still providing significant attraction to coyotes and fox.



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## Lynx

*Note long ear tufts, large feet, and completely black-tipped tail.*

# Reporting Incidentally Captured Lynx

**IFW regulations require all incidentally trapped lynx be reported** to either a biologist or warden as soon as possible and prior to removing the animal from the trap, unless a Department official cannot be reached in time to prevent injury to the lynx. Any lynx released under this provision must be reported to the Department within 24 hours from the time it was discovered.

Call **(207) 592-4734** (24 hr/ 7 days a week) to report the incidental capture of a lynx in a trap. Additional phone numbers for all MDIFW offices are listed here:

## **LYNX HOTLINE: (207) 592-4734**

Bangor: (207) 941-4470

Ashland: (207) 435-3231

Enfield: (207) 732-4132

Greenville: (207) 695-3756

Jonesboro: (207) 434-5927

Houlton State Police: 1-800-924-2261

Bangor State Police: 1-800-432-7381

Dover-Foxcroft State Police: 1-800-432-7372



*Trappers are required to report the capture of a lynx in a trap before releasing the animal. MDIFW staff will release all lynx from traps with few exceptions.*

# Releasing Incidentally Captured Lynx

Trappers are required to report the capture of lynx prior to releasing the animal from the trap.

In the rare event that you cannot reach MDIFW personnel in time to prevent injury to a lynx, you must report the capture/release of a lynx within 24 hours. When releasing a lynx, care should be taken to approach any trapped animals slowly and avoid making excessive movement.

A catchpole can be used to allow safe release of any unintended animal captures. A trapped lynx will allow the catchpole loop to be placed over its head, but it may react when the loop is tightened.

1. Tighten the catchpole loop sufficiently to hold the animal without cutting off its air supply.
2. Once the loop is around the lynx head, pin the end of catchpole against the ground to restrain the head.
3. Once the head is down, quickly place a foot with light pressure on the hindquarters to restrain the rear legs.
4. Remove the trap with your remaining free hand and foot.
5. Securely hold the catchpole until the loop is relaxed and the animal has been freed.

If a catchpole is not available, an alternative method to release lynx is to cut a strong forked stick to allow the pinning of the lynx's neck and shoulder to the ground while the trap is removed.

Never attempt to render a trapped lynx unconscious with a blow to the nose or head or by any other means. Life threatening injury to the lynx may result.

Care should be taken at all times when releasing a lynx because they are capable of injuring the trapper with their teeth or claws. Wearing thick gloves to release trapped animals is always wise.

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September 2003



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