



THE EDWARD L. ROSE CONSERVANCY



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Wild Things in Your Woodlands

Bobcat

contributed by Kristi Sullivan

The bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is a small wild cat found across much of New York State and Pennsylvania. About twice the size of the domestic cat, adult males weigh about 28 pounds and are 22 inches high at the shoulder. Females are usually much smaller, reaching an average of 20 pounds.

Bobcats are tawny to grey in color, with black spots, and very soft, dense, short fur. They have a stout body, pointed ears, and short, “bobbed” tails that are black-spotted with a white-tip.

The bobcat is an elusive and solitary creature, and catching a glimpse or seeing signs of this animal is a rare treat. They are mainly nocturnal, but sometimes venture out in the daytime. When visiting suitable habitat in the winter, you may be able to find bobcat tracks in the snow. Follow the tracks to experience life from a bobcat's point of view, walking from vantage point to vantage point in search of food. You may walk across a log to cross a stream, climb to the top of a rock formation, or stop and visit a brush pile. Be prepared—these cats are excellent climbers and strong swimmers!



Bobcats are efficient, wary predators equipped with sharp senses of sight, smell and hearing. They have four large canine teeth to pierce deeply into prey and retractable, hooked claws on both the front and hind feet. Bobcats are opportunistic, preying on anything that is available. Small animals such as mice, voles, shrews, squirrels, chipmunks, birds, rabbits and hares, form the bulk of the bobcat's diet. They will also eat porcupines, minks, muskrats, skunks, fish, frogs, and insects. Bobcats will even occasionally take sick, weak, or crippled deer, and will store carcasses for later use by covering them with leaves.

The bobcat primarily inhabits extensive forests, wooded swamps, rocky outcrops, and occasionally agricultural areas. The most critical features of bobcat habitat are places for refuge and protection, such as rocky ledges. Bobcat often use rocky ledges and rock piles for shelter, breeding, and raising young. Brush piles, hollow trees, and logs also provide good cover for resting and dens. Bobcats are not present in heavily developed areas. However, they can use smaller patches of wooded habitat. Bobcats breed from late February to early March, and young are born in April or May following a 50- to 60-day gestation period. Bobcats give birth in dens—rock crevices and hollow logs insulated with dry leaves and mosses. Average litter size is two kittens, but can range from one to five. Kittens stay with their mothers for several months, learning to hunt and kill prey.

Foxes, owls, and adult male bobcats may kill bobcat kittens. However, the most common cause of mortality for kittens and juveniles is starvation due to low food supply. During severe winters, adult bobcats may die of starvation too. Several diseases carried by raccoons and feral cats including rabies, feline distemper, and feline leukemia, may infect adults. Bobcats may live up to 14 years in the wild.

Bobcats will be attracted to areas where they can find suitable shelter and food. Habitat features that attract and benefit small mammals such as recent timber harvests, brush piles, and large logs left on the forest floor, will in turn enhance habitat for bobcats. Hollow logs provide dens, and bobcats often prefer to walk across logs in the winter rather than forge through deep snow. You can take further steps to benefit bobcats by protecting rocky outcrops and crevices from disturbance, and providing good hunting habitat nearby.

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Letter from the President

We at the Edward L. Rose Conservancy seek to protect forests, farms, wildlife habitat, and water quality in northeastern Pennsylvania and south central New York. A small organization, we promote environmental issues at the local, grass roots level.

Our members are your neighbors, friends and relatives, and we depend on their membership dues for much of our operational funding.

Members of the E.L. Rose Conservancy receive quarterly newsletters, keeping them in touch with other land conservation organizations and providing project updates. Members also may use our hiking trails, currently maintained at the High Point Preserve adjacent to Silver Lake and the Greenwood Preserve in Dimock. We hope to expand member access into other natural preserves in the near future.

Members are invited to special events, including an annual meeting in July. Most importantly, becoming a member of E.L. Rose is an effective way to support the natural environment in your own community. A standard voting membership costs only \$100 per year. Please visit ELRose.org to obtain details and to establish or renew your EL Rose membership.



Quick Primer About Easements and Rights-of-Way

Easement vs. Right-of-Way

The term “easement” and “right-of-way” are often used interchangeably, which is not truly correct. Which one of these “property rights” you are after depends on who you are and what need you have to access someone else’s property. Here’s a brief primer on how they differ. You may wish it were briefer...but there’s a lot to cover.

At a high level, an easement permits the use of a piece of property for a specific purpose. For example, your local electric company needs to repair a power line that crosses your field. They need an easement from you. ABC Railroad wants to connect tracks across your parking lot. They need an easement from

you as well.

All easements are not created equal. They can be “appurtenant” or “gross.” An easement appurtenant is forever and is tied to the property, not the owner. For example, let’s say you own a landlocked property like the parcel in the picture. To access a public road, you must travel across other people’s property. You may do so via an easement appurtenant, which remains in effect even if your neighbors sell their property. An “easement in gross” gives permission to an individual (or an entity such as a utility) to gain access to a downed power line. Easements in gross are revocable if the property changes hands.

Easements can allow or prevent certain activities. Your right to travel from your landlocked property across a neighbor’s land to access a public road is an example of an “affirmative easement.” On the other hand, your agreement not to obstruct your neighbor’s view of the mountains by constructing a tall fence or building is a “negative easement” because it prevents something from happening.

Thought you had it all down? Let’s go deeper. E.L.Rose obtains easements through a written legal agreement with each property owner—an example of an “express” easement. The two examples above, enabling the utility or the landlocked owner to access a road, are “implied easements” granted by “necessity.”

But that’s not all. Let’s say many years ago you built a fence onto your neighbor’s property. It went undetected until a recent survey revealed the error. To correct the “oops” and avoid having to re-route the fence, you ask your neighbor to grant you a “prescriptive easement.” That puts a different twist on “good fences make good neighbors” (coined by Robert Frost in his 1914 poem “Mending Wall”, in case you wondered).

Willing to learn a bit more? Easements may have limited scope. Let’s say you grant your friend the right to fish in that landlocked pond in the picture. That right is not extended to others, so your friend will be violating the easement if she invites her cousin without your permission.

Easements don’t necessarily last forever—they may terminate upon an agreed-upon date, or event, such as a property’s sale, or if the need disappears.



Finally, we get to the Right-of-Way. This agreement allows one person to travel across someone else’s property, which can be either private or public. Rights-of-way are a type of easement but an easement is not necessarily a right-of-way. A public right-of-way is broader than a typical easement because it allows anyone access to a defined portion of private property and doesn’t tie to a specific person.

Rights-of-way relate to travel and would be necessary if a private property cuts off access to a public area. In most other circumstances, you would need a different type of easement to gain access, not specifically a right-of-way.

Entities most commonly seeking a right-of-way are governments or utility companies trying to build and allow access to public roads. Other applications, such as building pipelines or constructing power lines, would still require an easement—typically an easement appurtenant—but not necessarily a right-of-way.

Got all that? Test on Monday.