



# COLORADO

## Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

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To: Members of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission

From: Colorado Parks and Wildlife Terrestrial Section

Subject: Summary of Colorado's Canada Lynx Status, Reintroduction and Monitoring Program, and Bobcat Status and Harvest Management

In preparation for the 2019 May Commission Meeting agenda item: "Petition CPW to prohibit recreational and commercial trapping of bobcats in Colorado," Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) provides the following briefing on Colorado's Canada lynx status, reintroduction and monitoring program, and bobcat status and harvest management program.

### Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)

#### Status

Lynx were listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2000. After conducting a Species Status Assessment, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) wrote a memo in 2017 indicating that they believe that the species should be delisted from the ESA. While the Proposed Rule to delist has not yet been published in the Federal Register, it is anticipated that this will occur during Fall 2019.

#### Reintroduction Program

Beginning in 1999, lynx captured in Canada and Alaska were released into the remote San Juan Mountains in southwest Colorado. From 1999 to 2006, a total of 218 Canada lynx were reintroduced to the state. By monitoring radio- and satellite-collars that each animal was equipped with, biologists assessed the status of the species and the progress toward re-establishing a self-sustaining population of lynx to Colorado.

#### Monitoring Program

Reintroduced lynx were monitored by CPW for over a decade to track the population's progress. In the summer of 2010, all of CPW's benchmarks for successful lynx reintroduction were met. Monitoring of the lynx population in southwest Colorado continues using trail cameras and snow tracking. CPW biologists are able to assess the population trend of the species in the region, which appears to be stable.

#### Conservation Plan

In 2002, a conservation plan adopted by CPW and the USFWS created a mechanism where both bobcat hunters and landowners would be protected from prosecution if their hunting or livestock depredation control activities resulted in the take of a lynx in Colorado. Up to 2 animals per year per activity (hunting or livestock protection) were permitted; this level has never been exceeded in Colorado.



CPW also has developed numerous regulations to minimize the likelihood of incidental take of lynx by bobcat hunters including education, timing, geography, and notification responses to take if a lynx is accidentally captured or killed. To date, there has not been any reported incidental take of lynx from traps or snares.

### **Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)**

#### Status

Bobcats are not listed as a federally protected species under the Endangered Species Act. Approximately 1.4-2.6 million bobcats are estimated to live in the United States (Roberts, 2008), an estimate referenced by the USFWS to explain the population status of the species.

Colorado requires all harvested bobcats to be checked by CPW, which allows collection of a significant amount of biological, spatial and law enforcement information. Based on this information, Colorado's statewide bobcat population is stable or increasing.

#### Harvest Management

Bobcats are a small-game furbearer species in Colorado. The harvest season for bobcats is set for Dec 1-Feb 28 of each year. The bulk of the season occurs before the onset of bobcat mating behavior and the season closes 2 months in advance of female bobcats giving birth. Bobcat kittens are typically born in late April/May and accompany their mother until dispersing in later fall and early winter.

Annual bobcat harvest has ranged from a low of around 1,300 animals to just under 2,000 animals over the last 10 years. Bobcats may be harvested with the use of hounds, predator calls, opportunistically, and with cage traps (live traps).

In 2012, the Parks and Wildlife Commission approved a series of 5 bobcat management guidelines (Annual Mortality Density, Harvest Gender Composition, Harvest Per Successful Unit Effort, Prey Abundance, CPW Manager Knowledge-Professional Judgment) to maintain long-term, self-sustaining bobcat populations in suitable and occupied habitat in Colorado, while also providing diverse recreational opportunities for bobcat harvest. Bobcat population trajectory is based on a "preponderance of data" standard among the 5 guidelines. No more than 2 of the 7 bobcat management areas may exceed a majority of the monitoring guidelines in a given year. If this were to occur, then the regulations governing bobcat seasons, harvest methods, and/or bag limits will be reexamined and harvest constraints may be proposed.

Colorado's bobcat populations are considered stable or increasing, based on examination of population performance against the monitoring guidelines. Colorado's bobcat season timing and length, limitations on method of take, and the annual data collected from mandatory check of every harvested bobcat supports the management of a viable bobcat population. There is no evidence that bobcat harvest must be reduced or eliminated to sustain bobcat populations at any spatial scale in Colorado.

#### **References**

Roberts, N. M. and Crimmins, S.M. 2010. Bobcat population status and management in North America: evidence of large-scale population increase. *Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management* 1 (2), 169-174.