

# Bobcat

Bobcats are found all throughout California and they are more common than most people realize. Sightings in urban and suburban settings are becoming more and more common. Adult male bobcats on average can weigh 20 to 30 pounds and can average 3 feet in length. Females are much smaller and may weigh less than a typical large house cat.

They can be various shades of buff and brown, with dark brown or black stripes and spots on parts of their body. The backs of the ears and the tip of the tail are black. They have ruffs of hair on the side of the head, that look like side burns and short ear tufts.

## Bobcat Sightings

Due to their elusive nature and caution around humans, bobcats are rarely seen. In areas inhabited by humans, they usually limit their activity to night hours. However, it is not uncommon to see them during daylight hours and can be active during anytime of the day.

The bobcat track is very distinguished with a round shape, four toes and no evident claws. Generally, it is twice the size of a domestic cat's print and resembles the track of a coyote or dog but is more rounded.

Just like house cats that scratch furniture, bobcats tend to mark their territory boundaries by leaving claw marks on trees, stumps and sometimes on fence posts. Bobcats claw marks are typically 2 to 3 feet above the ground, whereas domestic cats scratching occurs at a height of 1- 1/2 to 2 ft.

Bobcats are rarely vocal, although they do yowl and hiss during mating season, especially when competing males have the same intentions with the same female. Wailing has been described as a child crying, a woman's scream or that of someone in terrible pain.

## Food & Feeding Habits

- Food sources include mice, rats, rabbits, gophers, squirrels, opossums, raccoons, quail, also insects, reptiles, and birds.
- Domestic animals can also fall prey to bobcats. To prevent, see ways to deter bobcats.
- Bobcats hunt by sight and sound, which means that they spend much of their time crouching or sitting, listening and watching. Once they have located their prey, they stalk and then pounce.
- Bobcats are known to cover the remains of large prey with leaves or grass and return to feed on it.



Live humane trapping is not an alternative to ridding your home, property, or yard of bobcats. Because they are around in such large numbers, it won't be long before another one is attracted to your home. Bobcats are protected by wildlife laws.

## Mission Viejo Animal Services

Serving the cities of:

Mission Viejo, Laguna Niguel, Aliso Viejo, Laguna Hills and Rancho Santa Margarita

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## Habitat

Finding bobcats in open fields and meadows is not uncommon, especially if brushy or timbered areas for cover and escape is nearby. Home range for bobcats is typically 2.5 to 6 square miles for adult males, and about half of that for females. Rock cliffs, ledges and brushy slopes are important for shelter, raising baby bobcats and resting sites.



## Family Structure

Bobcats are solitary animals. Males and females are only together for the short time required for mating. They typically have a litter of about 3 kittens between April and July. Young bobcats usually are on their own when they are about 8 months old.



## Ways to deter bobcats

**Don't feed wildlife:** Feeding wildlife attracts small animals and rodents to your property that bobcats feed on.

**Keep dogs and cats indoors:** When left outside at night, small dogs and cats become prey for bobcats. Bobcats have the ability to jump fences 6 feet or more in height.

**Don't put up bird feeders:** Bobcats are attracted to the many birds and rodents that come to feeders.

**Feed dogs and cats indoors, and clean up after them:** Pet food, water, and pet droppings attract small mammals that attract bobcats.

Scare Devices such as motion detected lights, loud noises, and radios will deter bobcats until they realize that they are not life threatening.

No chemical fumigants, repellants, or toxicants are currently registered for bobcats.

## Trapping

Although trapping and relocating bobcats miles away seems like an appropriate method of relieving your property of bobcats or other wildlife, the reality is that they typically try to return to their original territories. This often results in getting killed by a predator in the process or being hit by a car. If they stay in the same area, it often results in fights (sometimes to the death) with resident bobcats.

Relocating wildlife will not solve the original problem because other wildlife will replace them and cause similar conflicts. It is more effective to follow the above recommendations for making your property less attractive to bobcats and other wildlife in the area.

## Professional Assistance

The Mission Viejo Animal Services Center receives many reports of bobcat sightings each year. Officers will respond if the bobcat is injured, sick or deceased. Or, if involved in a bite with a human or domestic animal.

