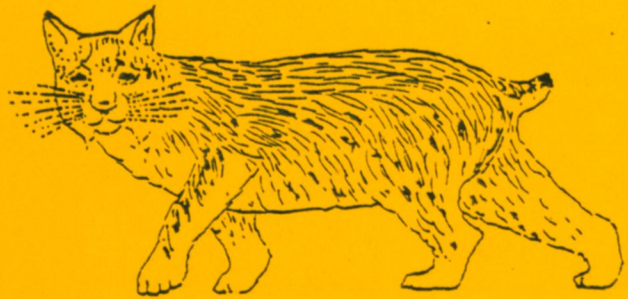


BOBCATS INTRODUCED

by Rosemary Curley



Both this winter and last, free-ranging bobcats have been trapped accidentally in western Prince County, Prince Edward Island.

On December 10, 1980, a female was taken in a fox snare set by Carl Annand at Foxley River. Examination of the cementum rings (annual growth rings similar to those found in trees) in the canine teeth of this specimen revealed that the cat was 9½ years old at the time of capture, and examination of the womb revealed no recent successful birth of kittens. When young are born, the site of attachment of the placenta usually is marked by a scar caused by trapped pools of blood. These scars persist a year or more, but this bobcat was apparently barren since no placental scars were present. On December 5, 1981, a second female was taken in a raccoon trap set by trapper Simon Clements at Burton. Again, there was no good evidence that the bobcat had borne young. The age of the cat remains undetermined at the time of writing, but biologists of the Canadian Wildlife Service in Sackville are expected to answer this question soon.

Bobcats are not native to P.E.I., and the best evidence available to Fish and Wildlife Division officials is that two pairs of young from New Brunswick were introduced by Tignish residents in 1972. These introductions were illegal, so it is unlikely that exact details can be determined. How well the bobcats survived or reproduced is a matter of conjecture. It is possible that the two females trapped were the original cats, and certainly the age of the 1980 specimen suggests this is true. There were unconfirmed sightings of a bobcat in P.E.I. National Park this summer, and it is possible that bobcats are spreading through the Province. Five to ten years from now we will know whether we have a bobcat population or an unsuccessful introduction, but whatever happens, we can only speculate now.

The bobcat is a southern adapted cat closely related to the more northerly distributed lynx, which is now extirpated (locally extinct) from P.E.I. The bobcat closely resembles the lynx but it is lighter, with males averaging about 9.6 kg (21 lbs.). It is found throughout the U.S. but is restricted to southern Canada, where it is a common mammal in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Snowshoe hare and small mammals are the mainstay of its diet, and occasionally it preys on upland game birds such as ruffed grouse. A successful bobcat introduction is not expected to pose a threat to livestock.

Common Raven	16	Brown-headed Cowbird	29
Common Crow	513	Evening Grosbeak	6
Black-capped Chickadee	51	Common Redpoll	117
Boreal Chickadee	2	Dark-eyed Junco	2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	3	Song Sparrow	11
Common Starling	977	Snow Bunting	201
House Sparrow	694		<u>6,312</u>