



CRITTER CONNECTIONS



Bobcats



Acacia



There are over 15 species or types of acacia plant in Texas. One of the most recognizable is called huisache (pronounced we-satch or we-sa-che). Acacia are drought-tolerant which means they do not need a lot of rain to survive, and they are found across much of central and south Texas.

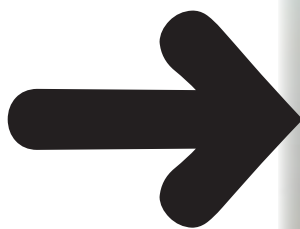
Acacias are shrubs, which means they have multiple small trunks instead of one main trunk like a tree. Depending on the species, they can grow up to 25 feet tall. Their leaves are double-compound, which means they are made up of many small leaves known as leaflets. Most acacias are covered with thorns to protect them from herbivores. Some species are called cat-claw acacia because their curved thorns resemble a cat's claws.

Acacias are usually one of the first trees to bloom in the spring and are recognizable by their puff-like yellow or white flowers. The flowers produce a sweet scent and provide food for nectar drinking insects like bees and butterflies. They are in the pea family and produce fruit in pods that wildlife will consume. Acacia plants also provide shelter for small wildlife. Humans can consume the beans of some species if they are cooked correctly and cat claw honey is made from the flowers. In other parts of the world, there are acacia species which produce a hard sap which humans use to make a product called gum Arabic, used in food, paint and ink.



Source: Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center and AgriLife Extension
Photos: Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center and Michael J. Plagens (bottom right)

Bobcat Mask



Mask from supercoloring.com/masks

Craft Instructions:

Download the mask template at bit.ly/CC-Bobcat

Get creative! Add 3D whiskers to your mask using pipe cleaners or straws. Draw prey in its mouth

Did you know...

- ... that the bobcat is the most common wildcat in North America?
- ... that bobcats are named because of their short tail which looks cut or "bobbed"?
- ... that bobcats have adapted to many habitats including forests, deserts, mountains, and even urban settings?
- ... that bobcats are crepuscular which means they are most active at dusk and dawn?
- ... that bobcats can run up to 30 miles per hour and are also excellent at climbing and jumping?
- ... that bobcats mainly eat small prey like rabbits, rodents, and birds, but are able to hunt a white-tailed deer?
- ... that bobcats are territorial and tend to live alone?
- ... that bobcats can retract or pull in their claws, so their paw prints do not have claw marks?



Bobcat

Photo source: Calibas

Color Me

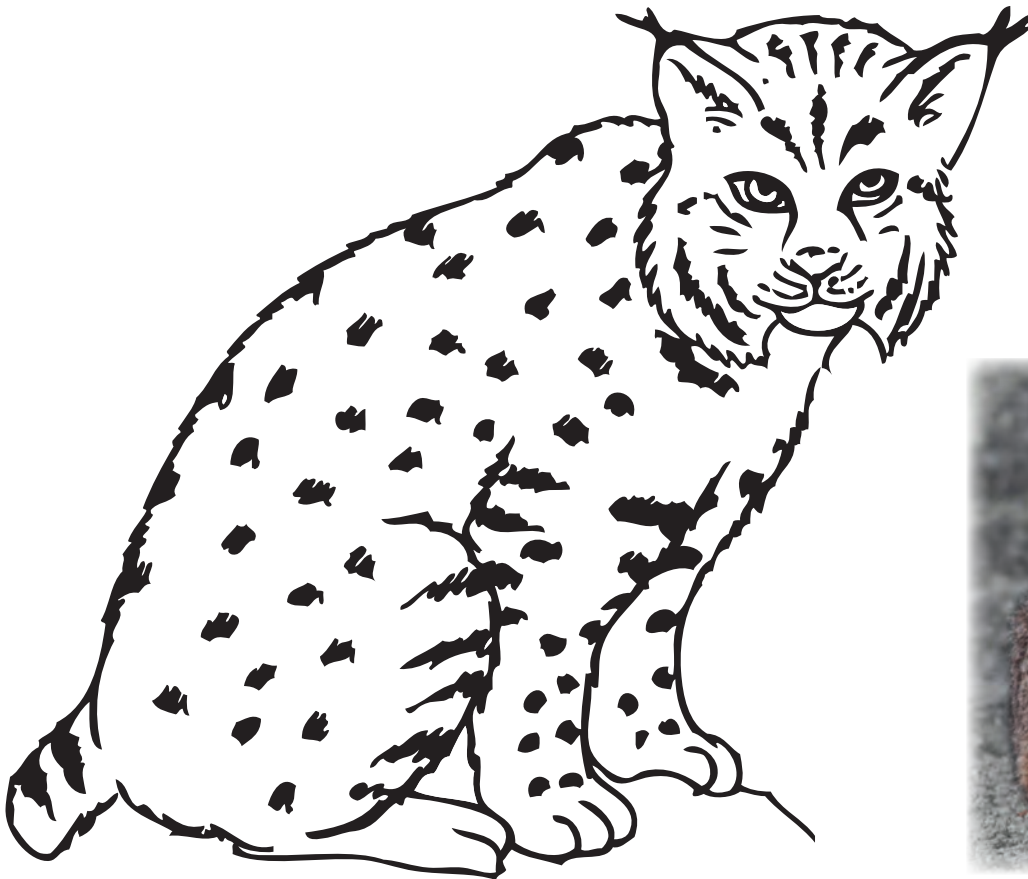


Image © Sheri Amsel, www.exploringnature.org

Bobcat
(*Lynx rufus*)



Photo source: Marlin Harms



by Elanor Dean

The Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is the most common wildcat in Texas and North America. They are found all over Texas in many different kinds of habitats. The closest relative to the bobcat is the Canadian Lynx which lives mainly in Canada and Alaska.

Bobcats are a medium-sized wildcat, about twice the size of a house cat with the males being a little larger than females. They have long legs with large paws and a short tail. The name bobcat comes from their short tail which looks like it has been cut, also known as **bobbed**. The word rufus from their scientific name, *Lynx rufus*, comes from a Latin word and refers to the reddish-brown color of their fur. They are covered with dark streaks and spots with reddish-brown or grayish-brown fur on their back, a white belly and a black-tipped tail. Bobcats also have large tufted ears and long fur on the side of their head.

Bobcats are predators and have characteristics which help them hunt their prey. They have large ears with tufts at the tip which help them collect sounds from their environment. They also have excellent vision with large forward-facing

eyes to detect prey. Cats, including bobcats, have a special structure in their eye called **tapetum lucidum** which allows them to see well at night. If you have ever seen a cat's eyes glow green in the dark that is the tapetum lucidum reflecting light, called eye shine, into their eyes so they can see. This is important because bobcats are active at night when it is dark outside and during dusk and dawn when the light is low.



Bobcat at night

Another adaptation which helps bobcats move around at night are their whiskers. Whiskers are long sensitive hairs that some animals have around their face to help them feel their way around their environment. If you see an animal with lots of long whiskers, then it is probably nocturnal or lives in a dark habitat.



Bobcat whiskers

Bobcats are carnivores or meat eaters. Their diet mainly consists of birds and small mammals like rabbits, squirrels and mice. However, they are able to take down prey larger than them like white-tailed deer if their usual prey isn't available. Bobcats are also known to eat **carrion**, which are the remains of a dead animal. They have sharp claws for killing their prey and sharp teeth for tearing up meat.



Bobcat ears

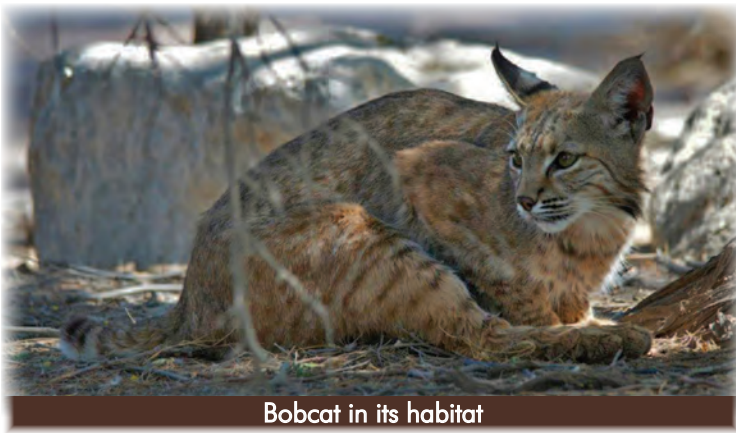


Bobcat carrying its prey



Bobcats are stealthy hunters and will quietly sneak up on their prey and attack with a jumping pounce. They are very agile and can jump up to 10 feet to pounce on their prey. Bobcats can also run up to 30 miles per hour and are excellent climbers. They can also swim if they have to but prefer to avoid water.

Bobcats are found across most of Texas and North America and are adapted to live in a variety of habitats including forests, deserts, swamps and even urban areas like parks and neighborhoods. They tend to prefer habitats with large rocks and ridges where they can sit high and look for prey. Females will den in sheltered rocky areas like small caves or habitats with thick patches of trees and bushes.



Bobcat in its habitat

Bobcats tend to live alone and are very territorial. You may be able to tell if a male bobcat lives in an area because he leaves behind signs to define his territory. They will scratch trees with their claws and use their paws to drag sticks and leaves into a pile which they spray urine on, called a **scrape**.

Kittens are usually born in the springtime around April. Bobcats have 2-3 kittens on average, but they have been known to have up to six. The kittens are born with lots of



Bobcat kittens

spotted fur, but their eyes are closed, and they rely on their mother's milk for food. After about nine days they will open their eyes, and they will begin to eat meat after about two months. Female bobcats will raise her kittens in a sheltered den, and they will stay with her for 9-12 months until they are old enough to survive on their own. During this time their mother will teach them to hunt and catch their own food.

Next time you are hiking along a trail, take a look around for bobcat signs. They may have left behind droppings, known as scat, or you might find some tracks. Cats have **retractable claws**, which means they can pull their claws in, unlike dogs which have their claws visible all the time. Because of this, bobcat tracks usually do not have claw marks. You might not see a bobcat because they are active in the evenings and they are very secretive, but if you see scratch marks and stinky piles of sticks and leaves, there might be one living nearby.



Bobcat

WORD BANK

bobbed – something that has been cut short

tapetum lucidum – a structure that causes eye shine in nocturnal animals and allows them to see at night

carrion – the remains of a dead animal

scrape – a pile of leaves and twigs used to mark an animal's territory

retractable claws – claws that are able to be drawn or pulled in

Sources: Texas Parks and Wildlife and National Geographic
Photos from Wikimedia Commons: Alan Vernon, National Park Service, Alan Schmierer, Pacific Southwest Region USFWS, Summer M. Tribble, Linda Tanner

Bobcat Scramble

The feature animal from this issue is the _____.

CBAOTB

The featured plant from this issue is the _____.

CAIAAC

Bobcats mainly eat meat, so they are also known as a _____.

VNCRERIAO

A bobcat is a type of _____ so it has fur and feeds its young with milk.

MMAALM

Bobcats have long hairs around their face called _____ which help them feel.

SHEIRWKS

Sometimes bobcats can be found in _____ habitats like cities.

BUARN

Baby bobcats are called _____.

EITNTKS

Bobcats have spots to camouflage or _____ in with their environment.

LBNDE

Bobcats are _____ that hunt other animals for food.

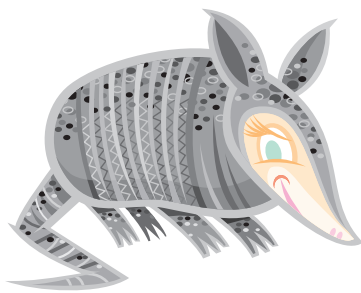
DRREATPOS

Bobcats can run fast and can _____ trees.

MBLCI



Nancy's Corner



"What is something
you learned about
bobcats?"

Clues that there may be a bobcat living
in an area:

- Scratch marks on trees
- Tracks with 4 toes
- Piles of sticks and leaves with a urine smell

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TWA is a membership-based, non-profit organization whose goal is to educate all people, especially the youth of Texas about conservation, management and stewardship of wildlife and habitat on private land.

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