

Key Points of Bobcat Hunting Opposition

1. Wildlife is held in public trust for all citizens of the State. Sound science and a peer reviewed, comprehensive management plan must be the State's first priority to assure the recovery of Bobcat in viable populations where suitable habitat exists throughout the state. The DNR has no plan and no existing way to reliably track annual fluctuations in bobcat population. Is this responsible for a species recently classified as threatened?
2. The best available science has only been applied south of I-64, documenting just over 3,000 animals. Yet, the DNR's proposed hunt zone stretches the entire length of the state, excluding only the east central and northeast portion of the state. This hunt zone is based on anecdotal information gathered from hunter surveys and habitat suitability, not actual solid scientific population studies. Hunters have not been trained in appropriate species identification. Over time hunter surveys may indicate a growth in population, but they do not allow a solid population determination -- who knows how many times the same bobcats were sighted. Too many hunters, too much variability.
3. Without having a solid population determination for the complete hunting zone, how can the DNR set a population goal for the bobcat? How can the DNR knowledgeably determine a non-detrimental amount of permits to issue from year to year? If too many bobcat are harvested, due to a misjudgment of population size, it could set back the re-population of bobcats for years or even decades.
4. Bobcats are trapped for their fur, sold as pelts for \$90 a piece on international markets. CITES provides for minimal federal oversight of state hunting seasons. It does not require that a state have a comprehensive management plan. The fur of the bobcat is better quality once the weather becomes colder. Given that Illinois winters generally are not cold enough to produce the high-quality fur until December or January; the proposed season, starting in November, starts too early. Additionally, bobcats can still have kittens that are just weeks old as late in the season as the end of November. If kittens are left abandoned because their mother was taken, this will increase kitten mortality rates and raise even more concerns about sustainability.
5. The money raised by issuing permits for bobcat hunting (not more than \$5 per tag) is inconsequential to overall DNR funding needed to maintain habitat, prosecute poachers, teach hunter safety, etc.
6. Bobcats are not a problem in Illinois. Bobcats are heavily persecuted for killing livestock, but the majority of their prey species are what are considered by some to be destructive agricultural pests. The diet of a bobcat consists mainly of rabbits, squirrels, and other rodents making them an important part of our ecosystem. The bobcat is shy in nature, if they can flee, they will. They are active mainly at dawn and at dusk and have no desire for a fight.
NOTE: A FOIA request directed to IDNR asking for the number of nuisance permits issued for bobcats in recent years showed that only 9 permits were issued statewide in 2013, and 3 were issued in 2014. Bobcats are not a problem! We already have a nuisance permit system in place to take care of those times when there is a human interface issue.

