

BOGDIVERSITY THURSDAY



—from Head Naturalist Clinton

Bobcat

POST #20—March 3, 2022

Mammals are nearly as sought after in the winter season by some visitors as birds, like Great Gray Owls. Many folks hope to cross paths with difficult to see species like wolves, moose, and a suite of weasels. Some simply enjoy the more easily seen species, like Red Squirrels. Perhaps one of the most hoped for mammals when visiting the Sax-Zim Bog is our featured species of today's post, the Bobcat!

Bobcats are a secretive cat, but are perhaps the most observed wild cat species in North America. This is partly due to their incredibly large range, which includes parts of nearly every state in the lower 48 states, as well as the lower portions of Canada, and south well into Mexico. Bobcats are also a fairly adaptable species: at home in deserts, swamps, boreal forest, and every habitat in between. Though they are primarily nocturnal, bobcats can be active at any time of the day.

Even though bobcats are not a large cat, weighing between 20-40 lbs, they are incredible predators. Rabbits, hares, and small

rodents make up much of their diet, but bobcats are predators capable of catching birds, fish, and prey as large as White-tailed Deer! With larger prey, bobcats will often cache the remains of their meal. No, they don't cache prey in the same way as chickadees by shoving bits and pieces here and there in trees! Caching for wild cats often means simply burying a carcass in leaves and grass or moving it from the initial feeding site to a more secluded location.

Bobcats are a resident species in the Bog and could be seen during any time of the year. March, however, is an interesting time for these medium sized cats. We tend to see an uptick in observations and tracks throughout the Bog due to these cats traveling to find mates! Bobcats have anywhere from 1-6 kittens in the spring and those kittens may stay with their mother up to 6 months. Keep an eye out for tracks along roadsides and even hiking trails through the Bog!

More information in the photos below!

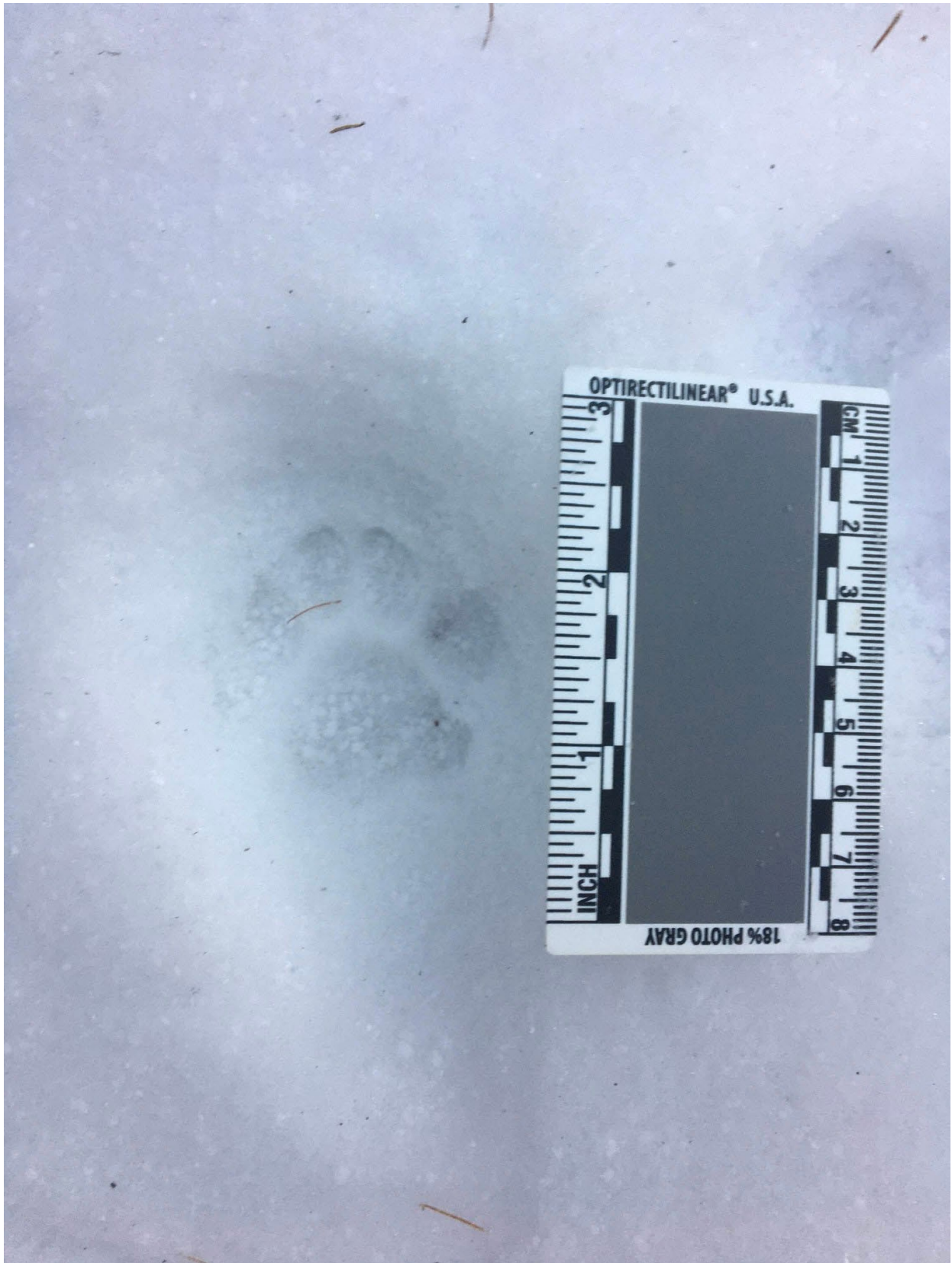
(Photos of a bobcat below by Sparky Stensaas, photos of the bobcat track by Head Naturalist Clinton)



If you ever have that creeping feeling that something is watching you in the Bog, that feeling may very well be valid! Bobcats are very patient and very often sit and wait before crossing roads, ditches, or areas with human activity.



Bobcats are very small footed compared to their cousin Canada Lynx. They also differ from Canada Lynx by lacking ear tufts, having fairly short legs, and having a bicolored tail tip. Some bobcats may lack spots or have abundant spotting depending where you find them.



Bobcat tracks are quite small. The front tracks (as seen above) have wide heel pads, where rear tracks often have smaller heel pads. Like all cats, bobcats have very round tracks and are around 2 inches long and wide.