

The Cat Came Back

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New Hampshire's bobcats are on the rise—and on the move, showing up in places they've never been before. Those are the major findings from a four-year study of the animal that puts the "wild" into wildcat, led by John Litvaitis, professor of natural resources and the environment, with colleagues from UNH and N.H. Fish and Game. The researchers estimate that New Hampshire is now home to 800 to 1,200 bobcats, up

from 100 to 150 in mid-1980s, and that they now exist throughout the Granite State, even in areas like the Seacoast that for decades had “zero bobcats,” Litvaitis says. Launched in 2009, the study trapped and collared 19 bobcats but also relied on citizen-scientists around the state, who sent more than 1,000 photographs and descriptions of bobcat sightings in to the project’s website. The broad enthusiasm for the project came as no surprise to the researchers. “Everyone’s gaga about bobcats,” Litvaitis says. “It’s an animal that exemplifies the things we like about nature. If you’ve got bobcats, the world’s still pretty good. We haven’t screwed everything up.”

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