

## Deletion of the Bobcat *Lynx rufus* from Appendix II. Proponent: United States of America.

**Summary:** The Bobcat *Lynx rufus* is a medium-sized cat with a spotted coat. It is one of the most widely distributed native felids in North America, ranging from British Columbia, Canada to Oaxaca, Mexico. The species has been in demand for its pelt since the 18th century. The species was included in Appendix II in 1977, and in 1983 the Parties agreed not to remove it from Appendix II for reasons of similarity of appearance to other spotted cats that were deemed to be threatened by trade. In the 1990s, North America again became the largest exporter of cat skins for the pelt trade, primarily linked to exports of bobcat pelts. The Bobcat is similar in appearance to the other Lynx species, and arguably its pelt could also be confused with the skins from a number of spotted cat species from other genera. From 1993-2002, according to CITES Annual Report data, 15 Felid taxa have been recorded in trade for garments or skins. The proponent has discussed similarity of appearance amongst Lynx species and noted that the differentiation of spotted belly hair may be problematic, but has not considered the issue in relation to the wider trade in skins of the Felidae. Bobcat populations in the USA are large, with estimates in 1988 ranging from 700 000 to 1 500 000 adult animals and numbers are believed to be increasing. Populations in Canada and Mexico are reportedly also abundant (although evidence from population surveys is not presented). Harvests for international trade are regulated and managed in the three range States. The proponent seeks to delete *Lynx rufus* from Appendix II as neither domestic nor international trade is thought to constitute a threat to the species.

**Analysis:** Following Resolution Conf. 9.24 Annex 4 Paragraph 4, it appears unlikely that deletion from Appendix II will result in the species qualifying for inclusion in the Appendices under Annex 2a in the near future. However as the species appears to meet Criterion B of Annex 2b, which provides for inclusion in Appendix II for look-alike reasons, reviewers indicate that the species should not be removed from the Appendices.

Information provided and statements made by proponents in the Supporting Statement	Comments, observations and additional information provided in the review process
<p><u>Taxonomy</u></p> <p> </p> <p><u>Range</u></p> <p>Canada, Mexico and USA.</p> <p> </p> <p><u>IUCN Global Category</u></p>	
	<p><i>Contrary to what is stated in the proposal, the species is listed as Least Concern (IUCN 2003)</i></p>

### Biological and trade criteria for retention in Appendix II

#### **B) Harvesting for international trade has, or may have, detrimental impact on population** (i) exceeds sustainable yield; (ii) reduces population to potentially threatened level

The species has been included in Appendix II since 1977. In 1988 the population was estimated to number between 700 000 and 1 500 000 adults. Geographic expansion of range and notable increases in density during the last decade suggest that the population size has increased. Populations in Canada and Mexico are reported as widespread and generally abundant.

Harvests in North America have varied due to changes in pelt value and fur harvest intensity for other species.

Hunting is regulated at the State level in the USA, on the basis of adaptive management programmes. Managers generally consider a harvest of 20% of the population per

*Nowell (2004), notes that the 1983 US proposal to delete the Bobcat from Appendix II quoted the same population estimate (500 000 to 1.5 million) that is attributed in the current proposal to Turbak (1988). Nielsen (2004) notes that Bobcat distribution within Illinois is less restricted than appears from the supporting statement (Nielsen and Wolf, 2002; Woolf et al, 2002).*

*Neither the level of international trade, nor the percentage of national harvest that is exported is provided in the proposal (Nowell, 2004). CITES data show the net export of over 740 000 skins from 1977 to 2002. Of these, the US and Canada reported exporting over 650 000 skins and over 53 000 skins respectively.*

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<p>annum to be the maximum sustainable yield.</p>	<p><i>US reported exports declined to under 10 000 pelts annually during the 1990s, but show signs of increase above this level in the current millenium. The major net importers were European Parties, Germany and Switzerland during the 1980s, and in the 1990s, Italy and Greece. There was no reported trade in Bobcat bones, and skin pieces and scraps apparently account for a small proportion of the trade.</i></p> <p><i>Reviewers concur that removal from Appendix II would be unlikely to result in a large unmanaged trade that would threaten the species (Mowatt, 2004; Nielsen, 2004; Ray, 2004) but caution that this is not to say that removal from Appendix II would be a positive contribution to the long term conservation of the species (Nowell, 2004).</i></p>

### Retention in Appendix II to improve control of other listed species

#### Specimens resemble other species and are difficult to distinguish, or most of taxon is already listed

Several species are similar in appearance to the Bobcat including the Canada Lynx *Lynx canadensis*, the Iberian Lynx *Lynx pardinus* and Eurasian Lynx *Lynx lynx*. Although differentiation of spotted belly hair may be problematic, the pelage and skull can be used to clearly distinguish Bobcats from other members of the genus.

*The species was included in CITES Appendix II in 1977 and retained in Appendix II in 1983 under a higher taxon listing for the Felidae, to bring the unsustainable trade in cat skins under control. The Bobcat is similar in appearance to the three other Lynx species, and arguably its pelt could also be confused with the skins from a number of Latin American spotted cat species (Ray, 2004).*

*CITES reported gross exports from 1993 to 2002 show skins of the following felid species in international trade (on the basis of the following terms: GAR. SKI, SKP, PLA; species marked – VU are classified by IUCN as Vulnerable): Caracal caracal; Leptailurus serval; Lynx canadensis; L. lynx; L. rufus; L. rufus escuinapae; Prionailurus bengalensis; P. bengalensis chinensis; P. viverrinus – VU; (species less likely to be confused with Bobcat, although juveniles may have spotted coats: Panthera leo – VU; Felis silvestris; F. silvestris libyca; Profelis aurata – VU; Puma concolor; P. concolor missoulensis).*

*Although the Iberian Lynx is Critically Endangered with an effective population size of only 250 mature animals, it seems unlikely that its pelt would enter trade.*

*Nowell (2004) notes that although Bobcat pelts and, to a lesser degree, skulls should be distinguishable by a trained person, pelt pieces and other bones would be more difficult, and concludes that removal of the Bobcat from Appendix II could create a loophole for illegal trade outside the CITES purview. Mowatt (2004) suggests the exporting states can and should be required to ship pelts in sealed containers and only export whole pelts should the proposal be accepted.*

### Other information

#### Threats

Loss of habitat to urbanisation is the only significant threat at present.

#### Conservation, management and legislation

In the USA Bobcats are classified as game or fur bearers and harvested under regulation. Closed seasons are

*In Canada the hunting of Bobcats is managed entirely by the Provinces and Territories and each Province and*

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<p>implemented in nine US States. In Canada, hunting is regulated and in Mexico five States have hunting regulations.</p> <p>Population monitoring is carried out through the use of indices. States periodically review species harvest programmes. In the USA, the <i>Lacy Act</i> controls transport of Bobcats across International borders.</p>	<p><i>Territory which allows Bobcat hunting has a management plan for the species. Removal from CITES would not affect this. Similarly in the USA, harvest is managed at the state level. In Mexico, the de-listing would have no effect on the current protection/oversight of the Bobcat. The species is not considered under any category of threat and is not included in the NOM 059 ECOL 2001 (the Official Mexican Norm) and hunting is restricted. However a de-listing could mean less oversight of the movement of Bobcat skins, but potential for movement of Lynx or Mexican Bobcat skins as bobcats of US origin (TRAFFIC North America, 2002).</i></p>

#### Captive Breeding

Some US States allow and regulate captive rearing for commercial purposes, but the current pelt trade is dominated by wild fur harvests.

#### Other comments

*The extent to which control of trade in Lynx rufus is needed to control trade in spotted cat skins other than Lynx spp. is not considered by the proponent.*

*Arguably, Leopard Cat Felis bengalensis parts may be confused with those of the Bobcat. However, according to TRAFFIC East Asia (2004), China has banned Leopard Cat harvesting and export certificates can only be issued for items in the stockpile that has been registered with the CITES Management Authority in China. Approximately 10 000 skins remain in the stockpile which is likely to be depleted in one or two years. China has banned the export of all other species that might resemble the Bobcat.*

**Reviewers:** G. Mowatt, C. Neilsen, K. Nowell, J. Ray, TRAFFIC North America.

#### **References:**

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