



## Summary of 2006 Bobcat Sightings in Ohio

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Bobcats were found throughout the Ohio country in early settlement times. They were concentrated primarily in the large, lowland areas of the north and unglaciated Allegheny Plateau region of the southeastern portion of the state. As swamps and lowlands were drained and forests cleared to make way for settlements and cropland, the bobcat population declined. By 1850, they were considered extirpated in the state. From 1850 through the 1960s, there were occasional reports of bobcats, mainly in eastern Ohio. From 1970 through 2006, there have been 131 verified (i.e., positive identification via road kill, incidental trappings, etc.) reports of bobcats in Ohio. Currently, the bobcat is officially classified as an Ohio endangered species and provided full protection under the law.

In 1997, a project was initiated by the Division of Wildlife to systematically monitor the status of bobcats in Ohio. This project consisted of 2 main elements: (1) initiating surveys to monitor the current status and distribution (i.e., unverified reports), and (2) continuing to investigate and record verified reports of bobcats as they are received.

*Unverified reports* – Five procedures were established to monitor the current status of bobcats in Ohio: (1) The “Bow Hunter Observation Record” is a survey where volunteer deer archery hunters report their observations of bobcats while deer hunting during the month of November. (2) Reports of bobcats from successful spring and fall wild turkey hunters were recorded on Turkey Harvest Record forms when they registered their turkey at an official check station during 1997 – 2003. (3) A “Bobcat Sighting” form was included in a brochure that all spring turkey hunters received when they purchased a hunting permit during 1997 – 2004. Since 2005, a note has been included in the turkey hunting section of the Division of Wildlife’s *Ohio Hunting and Trapping Regulations* asking all spring and fall turkey hunters to report bobcat sightings. Turkey hunters were targeted as a good source for bobcat sightings because bobcats occasionally “come in” to the hen calls made by turkey hunters when trying to lure a gobbler within shooting distance. (4) Observations of bobcats by fall squirrel hunters were obtained through the squirrel hunter survey during 1997 – 2002. (5) Incidental reports of bobcats from citizens as well as

those received via Endangered/Rare Species Observation Cards.

Unverified reports of bobcats are shown by source of report in Table 1. A total of 506 unverified bobcat sightings was received from 1970 through 2006; 134 of the sightings were received in 2006, compared to 65 unverified reports in 2005. Unverified sightings were reported from 51 counties during 2006 (Fig. 1) and from 74 counties since 1970 (Fig. 2). An unverified bobcat sighting was reported for the first time from Knox County during 2006.

*Verified reports* – These reports represent positive identification of a bobcat usually as a result of the animal either being killed on the road, photographed, or incidentally trapped. In situations where the bobcat carcass is available, the age, weight, reproductive status of females, and various body measurements are obtained.

There have been 141 verified reports of bobcats in Ohio, 131 since 1970, and 122 since 1990. There were 37 verified bobcat reports in 2006, compared to 20 in 2005. The 37 verified reports in 2006 included 18 road kills (3 in Guernsey County, 2 in Gallia, Monroe, and Washington counties, and 1 in Adams, Athens, Coshocton, Jackson, Meigs, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, and Vinton counties), 8 sightings by Ohio Department of Natural Resources personnel (2 in Guernsey, Jefferson, and Monroe counties and 1 in Gallia and Muskingum counties), 8 photographs of a bobcat (2 in Athens and Noble counties and 1 in Guernsey, Monroe, Muskingum, and Washington counties), 1 incidentally trapped bobcat in Jackson County, and 2 illegally killed bobcats (1 each from Jefferson and Monroe counties). The 18 road kills consisted of 13 males (11 adults and 2 juveniles) and 5 females (4 adults and 1 juvenile). All 4 adult females showed evidence of reproduction in the past or at the time of death. Verified bobcat reports were documented in 14 counties during 2006 (Fig. 3) and exist from 33 counties (Fig. 4).

Table 1. Unverified bobcat sightings in Ohio according to the report source, 1970-2006.

Source	Number of reports	
	2006	1970 – 2006
<b>Incidental</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>Endangered species report card</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Spring turkey check station brochure/observation</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Spring turkey harvest record</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Squirrel hunter survey</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Fall turkey harvest record</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Bow hunter observation</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>506</b>