BOBCAT FACT SHEET

STATUS:
Vulnerable.

DESCRIPTION:
Named for their short, bobbed tail, bobcats are medium-sized cats, slightly smaller and similar in appearance to their cousin the lynx. Their coat varies in color from shades of buff or brown fur with spotted or lined markings in dark brown or black.

SIZE:
On average, bobcats measure 17 to 23 inches in height and 25 to 41 inches in length. Males weigh approximately 16 to 28 pounds, while females typically weigh 10 to 18 pounds. The bobcat is approximately two feet tall.

POPULATION:
Approximately 725,000 to 1,020,000 bobcats remain in the wild.

LIFESPAN:
Bobcats live an average of 12 to 13 years.

RANGE:
Bobcats can be found from southern Canada to northern Mexico, although they have been extirpated (can no longer be found) in some midwestern and eastern states in the United States.

HABITAT:
Bobcat habitat varies widely from forests and mountainous areas to semideserts and brush land. A habitat dense with vegetation and lots of prey is ideal. Although adapted to a variety of habitats across the country, they do not tolerate the deep snows. Bobcats move about their home ranges most actively in the hours near dawn and dusk, hunting small mammals. They seek cover in conifer stands and on rocky ledges. Unlike the larger Canada Lynx, which they resemble, Bobcats are often highly adaptable to human caused changes in environmental conditions; some biologists believe that there are more bobcats in the United States today than in colonial times. They have vanished from parts of the midwest where most suitable habitat has been replaced by cultivated fields.

FOOD:
While rabbits are the staple of their diet, bobcats are also known to eat rodents, birds, bats and even adult deer (usually killed during the winter months).

BEHAVIOR:
Bobcats are excellent hunters, stalking prey with stealth and patience, then capturing their meal with one great leap. They are typically solitary and territorial animals. Females never share territory with each other, however, male territories tend to overlap. Territories are established with scent marking and range approximately 25 to 30 square miles for males and about five square miles for females.
OFFSPRING:
Mating usually occurs in late winter. Cubs are usually born in early spring after a 50 to 70 day gestation period. Litter sizes vary from one to six cubs. Cubs stay with their mother for a year.

THREATS:
In Mexico, bobcats are persecuted as a sheep predator and are frequently killed by farmers. Bobcats are hunted and inhumanely trapped for their fur throughout much of their range. Between 1991 to 1992, about 22,000 pelts were sold and traded.

CAPTIVITY:
Even under the best of circumstances, captivity can be hell for animals meant to roam free. Kept in small, barren cages, forced to sleep on concrete slabs, and imprisoned behind iron bars, performing animals often suffer from malnutrition, loneliness, the denial of all normal pleasures and behaviors, loss of freedom and independence, even lack of veterinary care, and filthy quarters. Attracting customers is the first consideration and the animals' welfare is often the last. Even when the mere display of the animals themselves is the "draw," the animals rarely receive proper care—and almost never the socialization and stimulation they crave.

Confined to tiny cages and gawked at by crowds, animals in exhibits and acts endure constant stress. They may suffer from temperature extremes and irregular feeding and watering. Without exercise, they become listless, their immune systems are weakened, and they become prone to sickness; many resort to self-mutilation in reaction to stress or boredom. Mental illness is rampant among confined animals. Torn from their families and deprived of all dignity, every part of their lives is controlled by their captors.

While zoos and aquariums may appear to be educational and conservation-oriented, most are designed with the needs and desires of the visitors in mind, not the needs of the animals. Many animals in zoos and aquariums exhibit abnormal behavior as a result of being deprived of their natural environments and social structures. Some zoos and aquariums do rescue some animals and work to save endangered species, but most animals in zoos were either captured from the wild or bred in captivity for the purpose of public display, not species protection. The vast majority of captive-bred animals will never be returned to the wild. When the facility breeds too many animals they become "surplus" and often are sold to laboratories, traveling shows, shooting ranches, or to private individuals who may be unqualified to care for them.

PROTECTION:
*CITES, Appendix II
*Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international treaty with more than 144 member countries. Appendix I listed species cannot be traded commercially. Appendix II listed species can be traded commercially only if it does not harm their survival.