

# Living with Bobcats



## In Urban Areas

Bobcats are common throughout Arizona at all elevations, especially in the Sonoran Desert, rimrock and chaparral areas and in the outskirts of urban areas where food is readily available. Bobcats are not considered a threat to human safety except in rare cases when they have rabies or are cornered without an escape route.

Visit [bobcatsintucson.net](http://bobcatsintucson.net) to learn the results of a study of bobcats living along the urban-wildlands interface and to report bobcat sightings in the Tucson Area. **You can also find there more detailed information on “Living with Bobcats” relative to Pets, Chickens, and Females with Kittens, as well as access the Final Technical Report and an abbreviated Public Report of the study findings.**

## General Information

If you see a bobcat near your home, there is no need to panic. Bobcats rarely attack people, and most human attacks have been related to rabies. It is more likely that bobcats are attracted to your yard because it has abundant wildlife, domestic birds, water and shade or other shelter.

Bobcats are generally seen alone, but groups may consist of mating pairs, siblings, or mothers with kittens. Bobcats can be active anytime day or night.

It is not uncommon to find one napping under a shrub in a brushy backyard.

In undeveloped areas, bobcat females have and raise their kittens in steep, rugged terrain often at the highest elevation in their home range. Females living in urbanized areas in Tucson often birth and raise their kittens at or near houses and in backyards, using human structures as a replacement for rocks, cliffs, and caves. If you see a bobcat near your home repeatedly or more than two days in a row, it is likely a female with kittens hidden nearby.

## BC #28 Sadie’s Story

Bobcat Sadie was shot and killed illegally on Wednesday September 28, 2022. The person who shot Sadie was prosecuted and convicted. Sadie was captured and radio collared by the Bobcats in Tucson Research Team in January 2022. She weighed 14.6 pounds, typical for an adult female in Tucson. She was a very urbanized female, spending much of her time at or near houses in the Los Arroyos del Oeste subdivision.



Sadie attempted to raise two litters of kittens but was not successful with either. She was well known in the Los Arroyos del Oeste subdivision and no doubt enriched the lives of many of the residents of the neighborhoods she called home.

BC #28 Sadie, was one of 5 radio collared bobcats killed by humans during the study – which equaled the number of radio collared bobcats killed by vehicles. These were the two main causes of bobcat mortality.

## Understanding Bobcats

Bobcats do not understand or recognize boundaries placed by humans. Once settled into a home range, a young bobcat will remain there throughout its life. It is the bobcat's home. She does not have the option that we often do, of moving to a different or better area. A bobcat does not recognize the difference between urban livestock such as chickens or turkeys, and native prey such as mourning doves or cottontail rabbits.

When humans place potential prey in the path of a bobcat, the outcome is very predictable. The bobcat is simply responding to thousands of generations of evolution that have made it an effective predator. Since bobcats rarely eat food they did not kill, they are dependent upon their hunting skills for their survival, and the survival of their young.

A bobcat cannot be expected to change its behavior because it happens upon chickens that in human terms are someone's property. To the bobcat, it is simply food. If it can easily access the chickens, it will. However, if the chickens are protected in a well-built coop, the bobcat will likely move on to easier prey. Bobcats do not

## Continued... Understanding Bobcats

aggressively destroy property or scavenge in garbage like some other urban species. It only takes small changes on the part of humans to live peacefully with these spectacular spotted cats. If you choose to keep chickens in an urban setting, they need to be kept in a predator-safe pen.



**Know:** If you eliminate one bobcat, another will soon occupy the now vacant home range.

Domestic house cats and small dogs should not be allowed to roam outside unattended. In over 1,000 public reports of bobcat activity generated through the Bobcats in Tucson Research Project website ([bobcatsintucson.net](http://bobcatsintucson.net)), only two involved a pet being threatened. In both cases, this was a house cat that was outside. However, Tucson is a very predator rich environment with a very large urban coyote population. Coyotes can easily scale 6-foot fences and will actively pursue unattended pets in backyards.

Urban bobcats in Tucson are not tame or habituated to people. We are simply part of their daily environment. It's important to remember that bobcats, like all wildlife, will defend themselves if threatened, especially by a dog, or they are trapped without an escape route. If you encounter a bobcat by "surprise" let the bobcat know you are there, and then slowly back away while keeping your dog under control.



## Laws & Regulations

Bobcats are classified as predatory and furbearing animals in Arizona. It is illegal to hunt or trap a bobcat in the Greater Tucson urban area.

AZ State law prohibits firing a gun within a quarter mile of an occupied residence or building without the permission of the owner. City ordinances may also ban shooting firearms within city limits, and the use of slingshots, BB guns, air guns or bows.