



A superb hunter, the Bobcat has all the weapons including “sideburns” that are thought to assist in hearing small prey.



From now through fall, wildflowers like Rattlebox will paint the meadows

Brunswick Forest Wildlife

“Coastal By Nature” the website proclaims. I agree that “The Forest” has been “thoughtfully planned in an environmentally sensitive manner”. Just look at the parks and natural areas...and, oh yes, the wildlife!

Much habitat has been preserved plus many partially-cleared areas represent new savanna habitat that supports declining species such as Northern Bobwhite quail and Loggerhead Shrike. The Forest remains a wildlife corridor used by the wildlife of still-wild Brunswick County. Residents and visitors include bears, bobcats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, deer, spiders, dragonflies, damselflies, reptiles, and over one hundred and twenty species of birds.

Since April, I conducted two birding classes with field trips for the Fitness and Wellness Center, with more planned for the fall. My sister, who lives in Gardenwood, assisted in organizing these sessions.

They turned into nature watching trips because, after the initial birding identification class, the outside portion included watching all wild things that moved and many that didn't...from birds to spiders to wildflowers to animal tracks. Such will be the nature of future trips. Please excuse the pun.

My first bobcat sighting was while scouting for one of those field trips. A few days later, the class found bobcat and quail tracks. So for several weeks, I stalked quail and finally got decent photos but never expected to see the bobcat again. Then on July 3, as I drove toward Jefferson Landing for a cookout at my daughter's, he crossed the road in front of me. After I pulled off and stopped, he turned back to check me out. My photo was taken out of my open window.

Mid-sized wildcats of the Lynx genera, Bobcats are found throughout North Carolina and are most numerous in the wooded habitats of our mountains and Coastal Plain. In the Lower Cape Fear they inhabit bottomland hardwoods, pinewoods, swamps, and pocosins.

Bobcats are superb hunters, having all of the weapons. They have very sharp, retractable claws and are excellent runners and climbers. The mottled coloration of their spotted coat serves as camouflage. Keen eyesight, great night vision, excellent hearing, good sense of smell, and sensitive whiskers are adaptations that enable nocturnal hunting. Their "sideburns" are thought to assist in hearing small prey by collecting sound waves and directing them toward the cat's ears.

Bobcats are primarily active during the twilight at dawn and dusk. They hunt from a little before sunset to around midnight and then before dawn until approximately three hours after sunrise. While cottontail rabbits are preferred, a Bobcat's diet may also include squirrels, cotton rats, opossums, birds, snakes, and insects.

In the Southeast, adult bobcats weigh approximately 16-30 pounds with males usually being the heavier. They are about twice the size of domestic cats in weight but may look larger than that because of their long legs and large paws.

Resilient Bobcats have adapted to living near humans, given the required extent of wooded habitat. They are very elusive and there is plenty of natural prey around so they should pose no threat unless folks feed or try to catch them. They may appear near backyards on the edge, where development meets natural habitat, and if challenged by a dog, they will probably climb a tree. Residents should leave a treed bobcat alone and it will eventually leave.

The bobwhite and shrike are on Audubon's list of "common birds in decline". Audubon is trying to encourage conservation of these species BEFORE they become endangered. According to their website, the quail and shrike are Audubon North Carolina's top two in percentage of decline over the last 40+ years at 96% and 95% respectively.

I have seen two shrikes and one was a juvenile so I know they are nesting in The Forest. Several times, including one nature walk, coveys Bobwhites have been seen that included a female and approximately fifteen chicks. These birds are at home in Brunswick Forest!

Enjoy our natural heritage. Watch the wildlife but stay back and please do not feed them. If you want to learn more, join us for the next nature walk sponsored by the fitness center, set for Friday, September 17.

John Ennis

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**In the territory I shared with the Bobcat,
my “prey” was this male Northern Bobwhite**



**Masked bandits caught in the act of
robbing my daughter’s bird feeder**



Funnel-web Spider



Loggerhead Shrike