

**PRESS RELEASE – *For immediate release***

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**AGENCIES TEAM-UP ON LYNX STUDIES**

Several different techniques are being used by resource agencies in Minnesota and other states to learn more about the presence and the habits of Canada lynx. This native of the north woods has been scarce in Minnesota since 1984 when hunting and trapping of lynx was closed by the State. Canada lynx populations never rebounded and it was listed in March 2000 as a federally protected “threatened species” under the Endangered Species Act.

This winter, the Superior National Forest and the Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) University of Minnesota Duluth established a study of the habitat lynx frequent and how far and where they range. Biologists have captured two male lynx in the Isabella area and fitted them with radio collars. They will continue to track these animals and hope to put collars on additional lynx throughout the next several years.

“Concurrent with listing lynx as ‘threatened’ comes the need to know a whole lot more about the species,” explained NRRI biologist Chris Burdett. “We want to know: Will they stay? Will they starve? Will they move to Canada, or to Wisconsin or Michigan? We need to know what they’re doing and how they’re doing.”

The use of radio tracking is the most recent addition to ongoing efforts to learn more about lynx in Minnesota. In January 2002, the Superior National Forest began a Canada lynx backtracking study. Cat tracks found on a road were followed into the woods to lynx scat or hair that could be collected for DNA testing. This technique confirmed lynx presence in the Forest, and the need for more intensive lynx studies.

“As we learn more about lynx habitat and ecology, we can better integrate lynx needs into our multiple-use management mission,” said Ed Lindquist, Superior National Forest Wildlife Biologist.

From March 2002 to September 2002 the Forest Service has sent samples to the Rocky Mountain Research Station- Carnivore Genetics Laboratory for analysis. Results positively confirm we have multiple lynx in northern Minnesota with most results from our studies on the Superior National Forest.

A genetics database for the Great Lakes region has been started. During the summer and fall of 2002 and through last winter, Superior National Forest coordinated with other Forests, State Agencies, and the Park Service to obtain additional samples for DNA testing. Tissue samples are better for DNA testing and much easier to process by the lab. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, local trappers and taxidermists in adjacent areas in Ontario have also contributed tissue samples for analysis by the lab.

The Forest continues to collect DNA samples, primarily on the Superior National Forest and have many more samples being processed by the lab. We anticipate that lab results will provide us with more proof of unique individual lynx in the area and additional information on sex ratios and relatedness. The Forest is also participating on efforts to collect tissue samples from lynx trapped in Ontario where they still have regulated hunting and trapping seasons. Samples are more available in Ontario and we feel the lynx are closely related to the lynx in Minnesota. In fact, they likely are part of the same population. We have not tried to estimate the number of lynx occurring in the Forest, but are confident that substantial numbers of lynx were present during the initial study period.

Agencies have received multiple sightings of lynx in these areas and other areas in northern Minnesota including sightings and videos of lynx with kittens. This is good evidence that we have a reproducing population of lynx on the Superior National Forest.

Lynx sightings occur where there are also signs of snowshoe hare—usually good conifer cover near shrub or new growth aspen. (Snowshoe hare forage on young aspen sprouts.) Lynx also frequent older coniferous forests of cone producing age, which is a preferred food for red squirrel (also a common prey of lynx.)

“Lynx is not a species that’s incompatible with forest management practice. They will go anywhere there is snowshoe hare,” said Burdett, a PhD candidate whose doctoral research is based on the lynx research.

The information from this research is being used on the Superior National Forest to plan projects to avoid adverse effects to lynx. Habitat needs of lynx are also considered in the analysis for revising the Forest Plans on the Superior and Chippewa National Forests.

Sightings of live (or dead) lynx can be reported to the nearest office of the Forest Service, Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, or Department of Natural Resources.

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Photo files attached.