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Web site is new link to Minnesota lynx study

DULUTH—New technologies are being used to keep track of old friends in Minnesota's north woods. The Canada Lynx, once a very rare sight in Minnesota, has returned and scientists are using satellite technology and the Internet to learn more about them.

A study by the Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) University of Minnesota Duluth and the U.S. Forest Service-Superior National Forest has been helped by reports of lynx sightings from the public. Now, folks can learn more about the research project and report sightings on a new Web site developed at NRRI. The site will be a popular stop for those who have seen, or still hope to see, a lynx in their neck of the woods.

“Public sightings of lynx have been an important element of our research,” said NRRI's Ron Moen. “We've received around 40 eyewitness reports from people, and that adds greatly to our database.”

Updates on the study, pictures and current project activities, as well as an email link and toll-free telephone number to report lynx sightings, are on the Web site at www.nrri.umn.edu/lynx.

Just this month, Global Positioning System (GPS) technology was added to the research effort. Two lynx were recently captured, collared and released with the latest GPS tracking technology, which can provide more complete and exact information over the next year. The GPS collars can report up to four locations night and day in all weather conditions, including whether or not the lynx are active or resting.

The goal of the study is to determine demographic information and habitat requirements of lynx in Minnesota while their numbers are high. Density of lynx will probably decline as numbers of their favorite prey, the snowshoe hare, falls over the next few years. Altogether, scientists have captured, radio-collared and released eight lynx in Northern Minnesota. One of these, a male, was caught by a trapper in Canada. The collar of a previously captured female was recovered without the lynx. Locations of the other six are being followed weekly.

—NRRI—

PHOTO: This lynx, caught this month, is awake and ready to roam after being fitted with a GPS collar.