

L24 Mortality Site

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A mortality signal from the Lotek GPS radio collar on L24 was picked up at about 1:30 PM on February 3, 2005. The intact collar was recovered soon thereafter following a 700m walk-in from a nearby plowed Forest Service road. The "bed/kill site," "main consumption site", "fisher cache site" and drag marks were all GPS'd at a later date using a Trimble GeoXT high accuracy GPS unit. These data combined with observations of tracks in the immediate area and the location and activity data dated January 13th, 2005 to February 4th, 2005 obtained from the GPS collar were used to develop the following narrative.

During the walk-in numerous lynx tracks were noted within approximately 100m of where the collar was found. These tracks were likely made at various times over the previous few days based on melt out conditions of the tracks. There were also several sets of fisher tracks within that same area. Location data from the collar showed that L24 had used this immediate area on January 18th, and then 11 successive days from January 24th through February 3rd. It is unknown if she used this area prior to January 18th. A snowfall of about 5cm on the morning of the 29th obscured all tracks made previous to that date. GPS and activity collar data shows that in the early morning of the 29th she left this site moving to the north, went relatively inactive in a small area close to a plowed Forest Service road from 5:15 AM until 9:00 AM, and then became active moving back south returning to the same area by 12:00 PM.

The bed/kill site was located on a small hill in an approximately 70 year old, relatively open, red pine plantation. The micro-site was under several small red pine branches adjacent to a roughly 40cm red pine and a small balsam. There were numerous lynx tracks within this area with 1 set passing by the bed site, and another set that went into the bed site. There were ice crusted indentations in the snow which looked to be at least 2 individual beds. There was one set of fisher tracks which walked up to and into the bed site. There was a 15cm circular area of red (bloodied) snow in one of the beds. There was no evidence of any struggle or fight. Drag marks over fisher tracks indicated the fisher had dragged the lynx away from the bed site to an area 2m away. There was another small area of bloodied snow. The fisher then dragged the carcass approximately 62m down slope through a small dense stand of sapling red pine to the edge of a relatively open lowland area. This main consumption site was heavily trampled and crusted. There were tufts of fur and hair scattered about, one piece of gnawed on bone which I took to be a scapula (collected), and the collar. The snow was stained with dirt and blood. There were numerous fisher tracks leading to and from the site in several directions. There were also numerous fisher looking scats. There was no evidence that any other scavenger had visited the site. The heavier used fisher trails were followed out and all ended in secondary consumption sites indicated by a trampled and crusted area and scattered clumps of hair. Some contained fisher looking scats. Drag marks leading away from this site to the east terminated approximately 170m away at a downed white cedar partially buried by snow. It was suspended off the ground to produce a subnivian burrow under the log and snow which was also heavily trampled. Fisher looking scats were present as well as numerous fisher tracks leading to and from this site. The dragging to this site produced a furrow in the snow that was not as deep as the furrow from the bed/kill site indicating a much lighter load and/or different snow conditions. Aside from a few more tufts of fur and hide there were no other lynx remains found.

The error in the GPS locations obtained by the collar did not allow for analysis at a fine enough scale to determine when the lynx first used the bed/kill site, nor when the lynx/collar was moved from the bed/kill site to the main consumption site. Activity data and on site clues indicate that the lynx was likely either killed or had already died by about 10:20 PM on the 29th of January.