

# S3\_E9\_LynxCreature

## Intro

Jordan: Hi, I'm Jordan

Kit: And I'm Kit.

Jordan: welcome to Starry Time

Kit: Asterisms edition

Jordan: where stars plus lines equals stories

Kit: with an asterisks.

Jordan: In this episode we'll explore ideas, concepts or people that didn't make it into the main show or just sometimes things that we wanted to talk about a little bit more.

## Creature Corner: Lynx

Kit: And this week we're headed into Creature Corner to talk about lynx or lynxes. I I don't know what the plural is.

Jordan: Plural is either lynx or lynxes.

Kit: Perfect.

Jordan: Alright Kit, let's start off with a brief bit of homework I assigned you before I provide a few interesting, I hope, facts about the Lynx. I sent you on a mission to listen to just a clip of audio or two of what a lynx sounds like. And I'd love to know, um, just to get this Creature Corner off, what'd you think?

Kit: The first clip that I listened to and I don't know, I listened to a few clips but the first one I listened to, the only sounds that it was making just sounded like me. MAAARRRRR MARRR and whatever that sound is. And then I listened to another one that had like a video and I was like this sound doesn't look like it should come from that mouth.

Jordan: No.

Kit: So uh, I was surprised. I didn't. I was expecting either something that sounded more cat like or something that was like much higher pitched. I think that's my big takeaway.

Jordan: Not a meow like a domestic cat, nor was it a roar like a lion. Um, I've heard it referred to as scream.

Kit: Mmmm. Mhm. It's a yowely kind of screamy. It reminds me a little bit of like the noise owls make sometimes. Like barn owls.

Jordan: The high pitched scream of the lynx quite distinctive and.

Kit: Yeah.

Jordan: All right, well thank you so much for doing the homework. Let's start off with our usual then. Kit, what else do you know about lynx?

Kit: So honestly I don't know very much about lynx at all. I know that I think they're. I agree with you. They're so cute. They look a lot like bobcats, but I believe they are different animals. But that might be false. Um, yeah, I just know that they're cute. Honestly that's, that's it. I know that maybe based on the Greek myth that we talked about, maybe their pee is weird in some way, maybe it hardens. I don't know if that's true but I imagine like there's something about their pee that must be weird or we wouldn't have any myths about it. I don't know, if it becomes... I'm certain that it does not become amber. I certain. I'm certain. No, I'm certain to that, but I, I don't know if it becomes something that looks like amber or if it hardens, but I'm just guessing there's something there. But honestly, nothing else. I don't really know anything else about them. Um.

Jordan: I have some bad news for you right off the bat, I actually didn't find out any more information about urine of the lynx. It does say that it gradually disappeared from view in the 17th century. The Noble Light and Nature of Man, written in 1521 says the lynx pisseth baketh in ye sun and that becometh a rich stone.

Kit: Well, that doesn't. That seems very unambiguous to me.

Jordan: Yes, a rich stone.

Kit: All right, well, um, um, I think it's still an undisputable fact that they are cute.

Jordan: Alright Kit, the lynx is a relatively new addition to planet Earth. They first evolved the genus Lynx about 2 million years ago from a common wildcat ancestor. And now there are currently four species of lynx. There is the Eurasian lynx, the Canadian lynx, the Iberian linksx. Shout out the human map,

Kit: Our good friend the human map. We love you.

Jordan: If you see a Iberian lynx, let us know. And the last species is. Yes, the bobcat, which is a uh, species of lynx.

Kit: Oh, okay, so I was wrong. So it is a subspecies or just.

Jordan: It is a species of the genus lynx.

Kit: Okay, gotcha. Cool.

Jordan: So the genus lynx has the Eurasian lynx, the Canadian lynx, the Iberian lynx and the bobcat. Each is slightly different depending on its habitat. So the Eurasian lynx lives further north. So it's evolved know padded paws for walking on snow and thick fur. Meanwhile, the bobcat has a few different adaptations that allow it to thrive in both forests as well as sometimes arid environments. But

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Jordan: let's just break this down. What is a difference between a lynx and a bobcat? The most notable difference is just going to be size and appearance. Lynx are bigger and they have tufted ears that bobcats don't have. They also have longer legs and

bigger paws. But yeah, so a bobcat is just a small summer vacation lynx. Which brings us to our next cool fact. What lynx eat. We talked about this briefly. The Canadian lynx eats almost exclusively snowshoe hares and its population density often correlates with the abundance of these hares. This is actually really important for ecologists because since these lynx are so specialized, makes them very easy to study since they're vulnerable to fluctuations in prey availability.

Kit: This reminds me a little bit of like with squirrels, when there's like a lot of acorns, there's a lot more squirrels. So like when there's a lot of hares, there's a lot more lynxes. That makes total sense. Yep.

Jordan: So we talked a little bit about what they eat. For the next fact I wanted to research more. How long does the lynx live? What is the lifespan of a lynx? You know, cats and dogs, somewhere around 10, 15 maybe. And Lynx is the same, they typically live for around 10 to 15 years, although of course a lot of them don't survive the first year. In captivity where food and safety from predators are guaranteed, Lynx can live up to 28 years. And the primary threat to their lifespan in the wild are diseases, accidents and of course human induced factors such as hunting and habitat destruction. But lynx are pretty solitary and evasive by nature, so they face fewer direct threats from other animals. But they do survive longer in captivity. Which brought me to my next question. Why can't we domesticate the lynx?

Kit: Great question.

Jordan: I mean we did it with a wolf, right? Mhm. There's a few things that make them a little bit difficult to keep as pets. First of all, um, they aren't very tolerant of human interaction. Domestication involves generations of selective breeding. But lynx unlike

domestic cats, do not have the social structure or dependency on humans that would allow for this process to occur effectively. They're highly territorial, they have a large range, they are fiercely defensive of their territory and basically they require a lot of space and natural stimuli that domesticated cats don't. Quote: "The lynx is a striking medium sized wildcat with distinctive features that set it apart from other felines. A sleek muscular build, a short tail. But its most distinctive feature, are the large tufted ears which stick out from the top of the lynx and give it a distinctive silhouette." And the question is, what are these ear tufts for?

Kit: M mhm.

Jordan: So there's a few reasons why they might have them. Primarily, of course, they enhance the lynx's hearing ability and they may also use them, uh, for communication. Since they have such short tails, they use their ears more to express their emotions or intentions when they do have to hang out with other lynx which is not their favorite. Speaking of the lynx uh, they are endangered. Some are more endangered than others. We've done a pretty good job of restoring the lynx population here in North America. They are currently not critically endangered. However, the Iberian lynx in Spain is one of the most endangered cat species in the world.

Kit: Mhm.

Jordan: There's an estimated population of fewer than 100 in the wild as of the early 2020s. And these lynx are native to the Iberian Peninsula which encompasses Spain and Portugal. And they've had severe population decline due to habitat loss and depletion of prey. But don't worry, the Iberian lynx doesn't rely upon snowshoe hares for its diet. Oh, it's got its own European rabbit. That is.

Kit: Makes sense.

Jordan: They love rabbits wherever they can get them, apparently. Primarily they eat the European rabbit or they prey on that. But anyways it's critically endangered and is considered one of the most urgent conservation priorities for wildlife organizations. So we have four species of lynx currently right now we want to keep that number at four.

Kit: Yeah. So I'm

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Kit: actually looking at a map and I'll post this over on our socials at starrytimestepod on the Universeodon server of Mastodon. And basically what you can see pretty readily on the maps is basically the U.S., Mexico, that's your bobcat territory. You've got the Canada, some parts of the U.S. uh, Alaska definitely has got that Canadian lynx. And then you you know, scroll yourself over to Europe and just the tiniest little pockets of Iberian lynx in Spain. And so yeah you can see why um, especially relative to the other populations, just how narrow um, their sort of habitat is. And so yeah that um, doesn't surprise me based on this map you can almost not even really see where their habitat is on the map relative to the other three species. Yeah, uh, I'll definitely as I said post that over on our socials.

Jordan: One hopeful note. Life does find a way.

Kit: M mhm.

Jordan: The first evidence of a hybrid offspring of the bobcat and Canadian lynx called

the Blynx

Kit: I like it

Jordan: was captured in Maine in 2003. Scientists at first thought it was sterile. They put a tracking collar to observe its behavior. However the collar was placed too tightly and the Blynx died of starvation. So if you want to know why these animals don't really like humans. However, soon after another Blynx was seen in Michigan. This one a female with a litter of kittens. Which disproved the theory that Blynx was a sterile hybrid like the mule. And another female Blynx gave birth in summer 2003 in Maine after being trapped that winter. And the Blynx is medium sized, bigger than domestic cat with ears that lean back with feathery tips. But it's face more closely resemble as a bobcat. It may or may not have spots and it may or may not have a tail. So the Iberian lynx, let's try to hold on to it. And the Blynx let's just try to stay away from it. Okay?

Kit: Respect its space at, this important evolutionary time.

Jordan: Those are some cool facts about the lynx

Kit: Yeah, I definitely now know a lot more about lynx than I did when we started, obviously. And I am looking forward to posting just picture after picture after picture after picture of various lynx this week on our social. So if you know more about lynx or have great pictures to share, please be sure to share them over on our socials. Can't wait to see them.

**Outro**



This has been Kit

Jordan: and Jordan,

Kit: sisters who love stars and stories.

Jordan: And we'll see you next time

Kit: on Starry Time.

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