

TILHILL FORESTRY Toolbox Talk

Wildcats

What?

Wildcats are widely distributed throughout north and central Scotland, north of the Highland Boundary Fault (which runs from Arran to Stonehaven).

Very few people have seen a wildcat – its Scotland's most threatened mammal, with perhaps only a few hundred still alive. It is classed as a European Protected Species.



Larger and heavier than a domestic cat, wildcats have a thick coat with brown and black stripes (no spots) and a thick tail with distinct black rings ending in a black blunt tip.

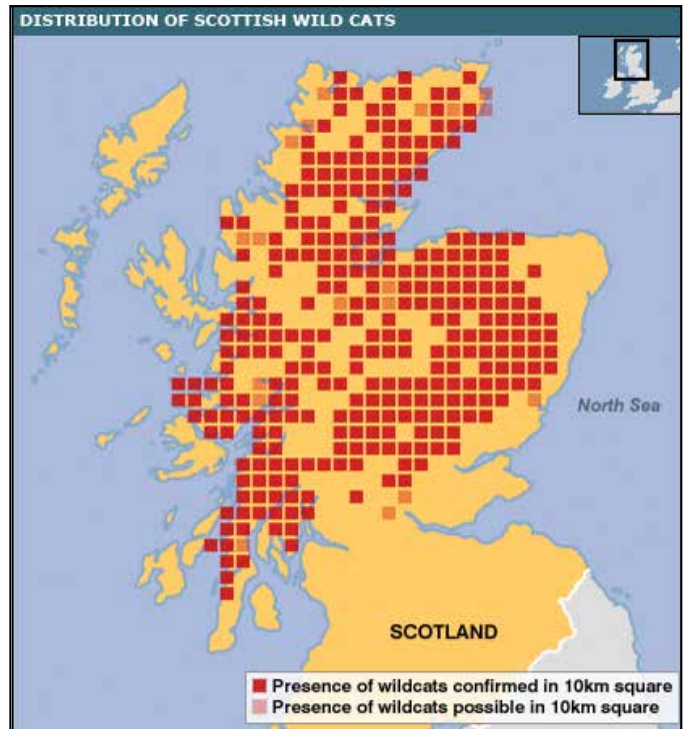
Look out for:

Wildcats inhabit a mosaic of woodland, scrub, rough grassland and moorland.

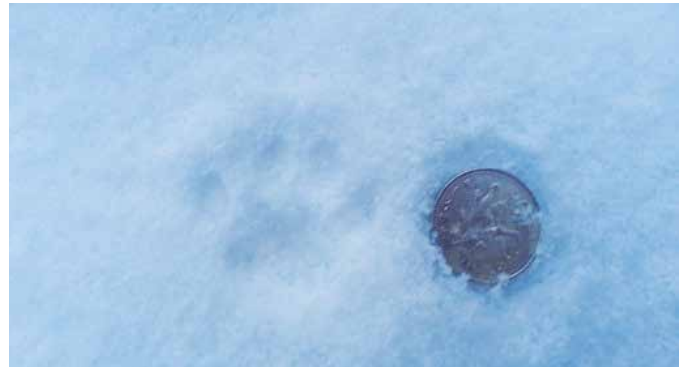
Den sites: used for breeding (Feb to Aug) and for shelter at other times. Check:

- Piles of rocks, logs or dense brash.
- Cavities in tree roots.
- Fox earths, badger setts, rabbit warrens.
- Thickets of gorse or juniper.

Recently used dens may have flattened vegetation, smoothed bark on branches, hair or prey remains. Scats are not commonly found at den sites.



Locations where wildcats have been recorded in the past. Source: SNH



Paw prints are smaller than dog or fox, rounded with four toes, no claw marks and not much bigger than a 10p coin.



Rock piles in woodland provide suitable den sites.

continued

Wildcats – continued

Why?

It is illegal to carry out any forestry work within 200 metres of a breeding den or 100m of a resting place without taking steps to positively avoid damage or disturbance and without an appropriate licence.

Avoid prosecution: It is a criminal offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- Kill, injure or capture a wildcat.
- Disturb a wildcat in a den or resting place.
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to a den **even if it's not in use.**

DO

- ✓ Immediately **STOP** work and inform your line manager if you see a wildcat on your site, discover a potential den site or see other evidence such as footprints.

DON'T

- ✗ Use any machinery or fell trees within the buffer zone of a den site without a licence from SNH.
- ✗ Proceed with any operations until advice has been sought.



Record of Briefing or Toolbox Talk

TT82 Wildcats

I have been personally briefed in the contents of this document.

Please add any questions or suggestions relating to this briefing or any other matters you wish to raise:

Please add any suggestions on health, safety and environmental matters:

I have been briefed by: _____ Date: _____

My District: _____

I understand that I am encouraged to submit comment and contribution.

Signed: _____ Name: _____ Date: _____

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Signed sheets to be held as records at District or Regional level.