

# Lost pet lynx found in Margate

Cat now being taken care of at wildlife sanctuary.

By BECKY TOOSYA  
FRONT PAGE  
FORUM STAFF WRITER

It looked like a lost cat, just a rather large one.

It was 10 p.m. on a recent Sunday. Denise Hynson was sitting with her family by the Dunkin Donuts when she saw it pacing down Sample Road and then sitting quietly on the sidewalk.

She could not believe her eyes.

It was a Canadian or North American Lynx, an exotic cat, which was quite out of place on Margate's streets.

"I took off, trying to keep up with her to watch her," said Hynson, who lives in Margate and is known as "The Cat Lady" because she regularly feeds the neighborhood's stray cats.

Her husband Joe called the police, thinking they would do the right thing.



## NICE KITTY?:

This lynx was found roaming around in Margate. It is now being taken care of at Vanishing Species, a non-profit wildlife sanctuary in Davie.

Staff photo/  
Jacqueline Carini

Instead, when police called Florida Fish and Wildlife, they reported a bobcat, which is considered a local cat. They also said it had no collar and shot the cat with a taser

gun at least three times, Hynson said.

"I don't think they handled the situation correctly," she said. "I just don't think it was necessary; all it did was make it mad. It

just got down from the tree and ran to the next tree."

Police told her that if they couldn't find anyone

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## LYNX

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to take the cat down, its future was grim, so she decided to stay there to make sure they didn't kill it.

"She is really a sweet cat," said Hynson of the 21-pound female cat. "She wasn't hurting anyone."

But Hynson also understands that police are not trained for something like this.

For animal control officer Kelly Slade, it was the first time she ever had to deal with an exotic cat. "It's a beautiful cat," she said.

She knew it was an exotic because of its size, and she noticed that it had an electronic collar on.

But Slade said that any wild animal can pose problems. "Any cat like this can be dangerous," she said. "It could attack people or other animals."

Luckily for the cat, Vanishing Species, a non-profit wildlife sanctuary in Davie, was contacted.

"She seems to be healthy," said Barbara Harrod of Vanishing Species. "All that she should be doing, she's doing, except being nice and sweet."

And that's understandably so.

In order to trap the cat, her husband Jeff had to chase it, and he had to use two tranquilizer guns to catch it. The cat is still recuperating from the influence of the drugs.

They fed it raw chicken, which it seemed to like, although normally in the wild it would be hunting rabbits and deer in some snowy mountains.

As it walked toward the food, the cat shook its front paws, as if they were hurting. Harrod shook her head; she thinks it's still

hurting from the taser shocks.

"Tasers may work on humans, but it doesn't really work on cats," she said.

Harrod knows about exotic cats.

Along with two cats and a dog in her house, she also has two baby tigers, a baby puma, a young puma, a wild cat, and now the lynx — that's besides the parrots and other unique and exotic small animals she has in other cages in the house.

This 9-month-old lynx has gray and brown fur with black spots and stripes, a lot of fur around the face and ears, a little bobcat tail, and big webbed paws to be able to run fast in the snow.

"This lynx has been to the vet before because all four paws have been declawed," Harrod said.

She thinks the cat belongs to someone in Margate, but Hynson, who

found the cat, disagrees.

"I just can't imagine anyone in Margate owning one, she said, pointing out that the lots in Margate are not large enough for someone to own an exotic cat.

Perhaps the owner of the cat has not come forward because he or she may not have a license, said Hynson, who has been trying to locate the owner.

Owning a pet lynx is not easy; it takes a certain kind of person who is willing and able to adjust to this kind of lifestyle.

"It's a major investment," she said. "It's not like owning a dog that you can take to a kennel and drop it off and come back three weeks later."

A pet lynx would cost about \$2,500, Harrod said. Yet it is not money, but time, that is required to have a nice pet lynx.

Lynxes are considered an exotic species, so the

state requires a class two permit from anyone who owns one.

One of the requirements for the permit is that the person needs to spend 1,000 hours of hands-on time with the animal, or 100 hours of hands-on time and take a test.

Harrod owns several permits and licenses to take care of the tigers and pumas and all the other animals she trains for shows, television and special occasions.

"I just hope her parents show up," she said.

She watches the lynx fall asleep and in her heart she hopes she gets to keep her and train her.

"If nobody claims her, then we'll put her on our program," she said.

Becky Toosya can be reached at (954) 752-7474 or at [btoosya@tribune.com](mailto:btoosya@tribune.com).