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# Bobcat rehabilitated then released in West Milford

MONDAY APRIL 23, 2012, 9:17 AM

BY MATT FAGAN  
STAFF WRITER

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Valentina, a bobcat hit by a vehicle and knocked silly shortly before Valentine's Day of this year, was released recently by her angels of mercy, Woodlands Wildlife Refuge, after a lengthy convalescence.

The stricken feline wound up in Woodlands' care on Feb. 8, after a local tree cutter, [Wayne W. Wyatt](#), pulled his truck over when he saw a struck animal lying alongside Union Valley Road in [West Milford](#).

"I thought it couldn't be a raccoon," Wyatt said.

On closer examination, he said he realized that it was a bobcat.

"Its back legs were stiff," Wyatt said, adding that as he examined the cat, "It opened its eyes."

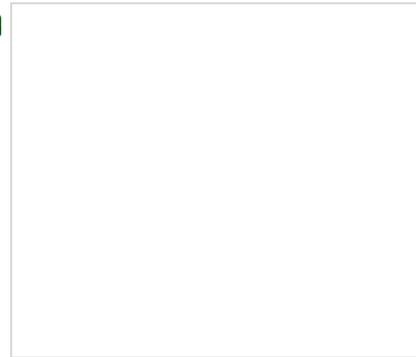
Concerned for the cat's safety, he tried to lift it out of the road, to which the cat took objection. Wyatt contacted [West Milford Animal Control](#) and West Milford Animal Control Officer Bev Lujbli in turn called Woodlands in Alexandria Township for its expertise.

The animal, Woodlands Executive Director Tracy Leaver said, wasn't in great shape. From X-rays and observations, she said they could tell the animal had



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WOODLANDS WILDLIFE REFUGE

Dr. Keith Ross from the Animal Hospital of Clinton-Perryville stitching up Valentina after X-rays and exams showed a badly injured leg.



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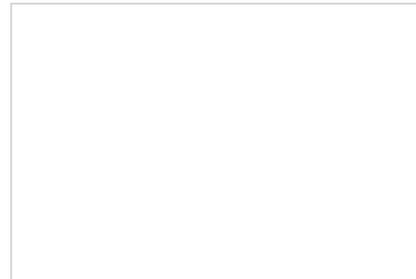
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been severely hurt.

"She was hit by a car and had a really bad concussion and a bad laceration that took some serious stitching," Leaver said. "She was barely conscious and not able to walk."

Valentina was given a chance to recover at the refuge until she was healthy enough to be released. That happened April 9.

"Her vision took a while to come back," Leaver said.

When they released Valentina, they made sure it was as close as possible to where she was found. Leaver noted that because of the limited amount of habitat and the competition for suitable living space among female bobcats, this is especially important.

Nick Valent, who studies and keeps tabs on bobcat numbers for the state Department of Environmental Protection, noted that returning a female bobcat to the wild is important in maintaining the species' numbers. In New Jersey bobcats are on the endangered list. He said the state is still trying to get a handle on the population figures.

He said by using a dog that can detect bobcat scat, which allows it to be collected and analyzed, they are getting a sense of the population.

"We're working on that," Valent said. "There's a crude estimate (about 100) I don't have a lot of faith in."

Valent added that evidence shows that bobcats, like black bears, are primarily found north of Interstate 80 and west of Interstate 287.

"(In New Jersey) they are still endangered," Valent said. "That's why we make an effort to save them."

Fans of bobcats can view Valentina's release on YouTube by searching for "Endangered bobcat release in New Jersey." Lujbli, who was on hand for the release (and in the video), said Valentina took a few moments to realize she was free to go, but after a bit of prodding, ran off.

The mission of Woodlands Wildlife Refuge is the care and release of orphaned and injured native wildlife back to their natural habitats. It also provides educational programs about New Jersey's wildlife.

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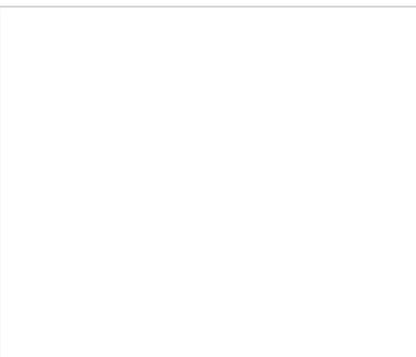
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Valentina, a bobcat that was treated by the Woodlands Wildlife Refuge in Alexandria Township, was recently released in West Milford after her recovery was completed. Here she's shown in the enclosure at the refuge.



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