

You can help track lynx on Vail Pass

Skiers, snowmobilers will be ask to carry GPS to track their routes in Vail Pass Recreation Area

Vail Daily staff report
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Vail, CO Colorado
January 15, 2010

VAIL, Colorado — Skiers and other users of the Vail Pass Winter Recreation Area can help the U.S. Forest Service with a wildlife research project by wearing a GPS unit. Forest Service and Colorado Division of Wildlife researchers are studying how lynx use the Vail Pass and how the threatened cats are impacted by skiers and other users.



Colorado Division of Wildlife photo

Canada lynx has been listed as a threatened species in the lower 48 states. Lynx were reintroduced to Colorado beginning in 1999. The Division of Wildlife is pleased with the overall success of the program, but the agency says it is too early to determine if the population will persist for the long term.

“Lynx are very rare and secretive” said Dr. John Squires, research wildlife biologist with the Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station in Missoula, Mont. “And we don't understand how they respond to winter recreation.”

Researchers want to find out how many lynx use the Vail Pass area and recreation causes them to change their behavior. On selected days, both mid-week and weekends, Forest Service employees will ask Vail Pass cross country skiers and snowmobilers to carry a GPS that will record their routes. This data will be downloaded as a map and compared with data collected from GPS units on collared lynx. Trail counters also will be randomly placed on travel routes throughout the Vail Pass Winter Recreation Area this winter. Forest Service personnel will be conducting lynx track surveys in the study area as well.

For more information, contact Liz Roberts, a wildlife biologist with the White River National Forest, at 970-945-3257.