

Wildlife on Mount Baldo

Lynx

The phantom of the Alps

Order *Carnivora*
 Family *Felidae*
 Genus *Lynx*
 Species *Lynx lynx* L.

Lynxes are not reported on Mount Baldo and they would seem to have disappeared altogether from Italy. These felines are cats of large stature (80-120m) with characteristic tufts of hair on either side of the muzzle. The coat color varies from dark gray to a reddish brown, and has clear dark spots. Paws have retractable claws and are large and furry, which allows a lynx to move around easily even in fresh snow and so stealthily as to be almost imperceptible. Their well-known visual skills ("lynx eye") and very sharp hearing make them perfectly suited to hunt in the forest environment.

Lynxes live alone in thick forests with rough and rocky terrains, which makes hunting easier and allows them to find shelters without difficulty during the winter, or while the kittens are being reared. They prey on small and medium size animals such as hares, rabbits, rodents, foxes, birds and reptiles but are also likely to attack larger animals like roe deer, young deer and chamois, which is why in the past lynxes were also called "deer wolves". The successful introduction of chamois on Mount Baldo contributes in making large extensions of its territory a perfectly suitable habitat for lynxes.

Because of their alleged dangerousness (and for the beauty of their tawny, spotted fur that attracted poachers) lynxes have been hunted down and exterminated. In reality, they are very elusive animals, shy and intelligent which makes it very difficult for humans to come upon them. There is evidence that lynxes have returned in Northern Italy for their presence has been detected even in areas where it was believed they had become extinct. Are you absolutely sure that a lynx is not looking down upon you from the tree behind you?

