

Town workers rescue wildcat

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A wild cat, either a bobcat or a lynx, was rescued by Fort Kent water officials on Monday morning after it went into a water treatment lagoon and couldn't get out. (Photo courtesy of Scott Boucher)

FORT KENT - A wildcat escaped a murky death Monday morning when it was rescued by employees at the Fort Kent Water and Wastewater Department.

The animal, which was likely a lynx, probably would have drowned if not for the quick thinking of town workers, District Game Warden Adrian Marquis said Monday.

The Maine Warden Service received a report between 10 and 10:30 a.m. that a lynx or a bobcat was trapped in a water treatment lagoon near West Main Street.

Marquis said that by the time he arrived, the animal had been rescued — with a life preserver.

As a precaution, flotation rings are set up every 50 feet on the perimeters of the three lagoons at the water treatment facility, Mark Soucy, superintendent of the Fort Kent Water and Wastewater Department, said Monday.

That morning, Soucy said, one of his men went to the lagoon to test the oxygen level in the water. When Ricky Berube got there, he noticed something swimming around the lagoon — "and it didn't look like a duck," Soucy recounted Berube as saying.

Berube called Soucy, Greg Bernier and Scott Boucher, also with the department, for help.

The men realized the cat had been in the lagoon for quite some time and that it was tiring. Seeing that the cat couldn't get any traction because of the lagoon lining and the slimy film on top of it, they formulated a rescue plan.

Grabbing one of the life rings, they floated it out to the animal. At first, the cat kept swimming away from the foreign object, but once they left the ring in one spot, the cat hauled itself onto the device and didn't move as the workers pulled it to the lagoon's edge.

Soucy said the cat sat on the gravel and didn't move for about an hour, gathering its strength. It then got up, walked out a nearby open gate at the fenced-in facility, and disappeared into the woods.

Marquis said that because of the condition of the cat — it was dirty from being in the lagoon — officials were not sure whether it was a bobcat or a lynx. He said photos of the animal would be shown to a regional wildlife biologist for identification.

This is the first time workers have pulled a big cat out of the lagoon. Their only other rescue since the facility opened in 1997 involved a rabbit.

"They were quite ingenious, really," Marquis said. "I never thought a cat would have gone on top of a ring

buoy like that and let itself get dragged out to safety. It's against their nature to be that close to humans, but it worked."

Soucy said it was the common sense thing to do.

"We just reacted like anybody else would, I guess," he said. "We just didn't want to see it drown."

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