

# Building Baffled Bobcat Bungalows

By Bary Culver

Global warming is giving us all a painful lesson in the dynamics of the heat engine known as climate. Adding heat to the system causes all kinds of unstable and unpredictable fluctuations that present serious challenges to agriculture and animal husbandry—record-breaking conditions of every sort. Storms and floods one year, draught the next. Niños and Niñas, making the jet stream whip around like a snake. This last phenomenon can produce the paradoxical effect of extreme chill factors in formally mild climates. It looks like mild, stable climates are a thing of the past.

Those of us who have exotic animals and who may not be living in the animal's ideal climate to begin with, need to protect them from worsening extremes of every sort. This requires better, more adaptable housing than was adequate in the past. For



most feline species, extreme cold is more important to deal with than extreme heat.

The objective is to conserve the animal's own body heat inside their house. This is done with insulation, thermal mass, baffled doors to reduce drafts, and by making the house small enough. Overly spacious houses are impossible for cats to keep warm and are not comfortable to them. Cats want a small defensible space with a small defensible entrance they can block with their body. Snug is the word, with just enough room so a mom can lie down comfortably without lying on her babies. In cases where the ground can get really cold or even freeze, the house needs a wood floor, which has a trapped air space separating it from the ground. Supplemental heat can be added with waterproof heating pads made for puppies or piglets and sold in pet and farmer supply catalogs like FarmTek. In the case of neonates, these would be essential. The floor should be large enough so there is an area where kittens can get off the heating pad if it is too warm. I build my houses so they sit on a  $\frac{3}{4}$  or 1 inch plywood floor, which in turn sits on pieces of treated 4 by

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4 and is not fastened to the house. That way the floor is easy to clean or replace and it can be removed in the summer so the cat can get the cooling effect of contact with the ground or concrete pad.

I also make the door baffles removable to provide better ventilation in the summer. Shown are plans and dimensions for a sim-

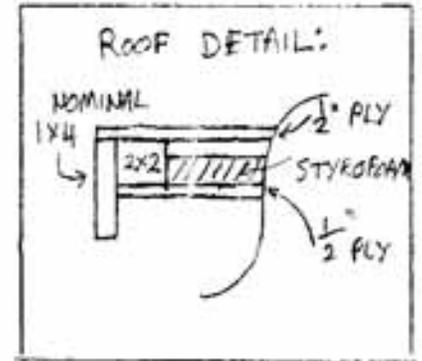
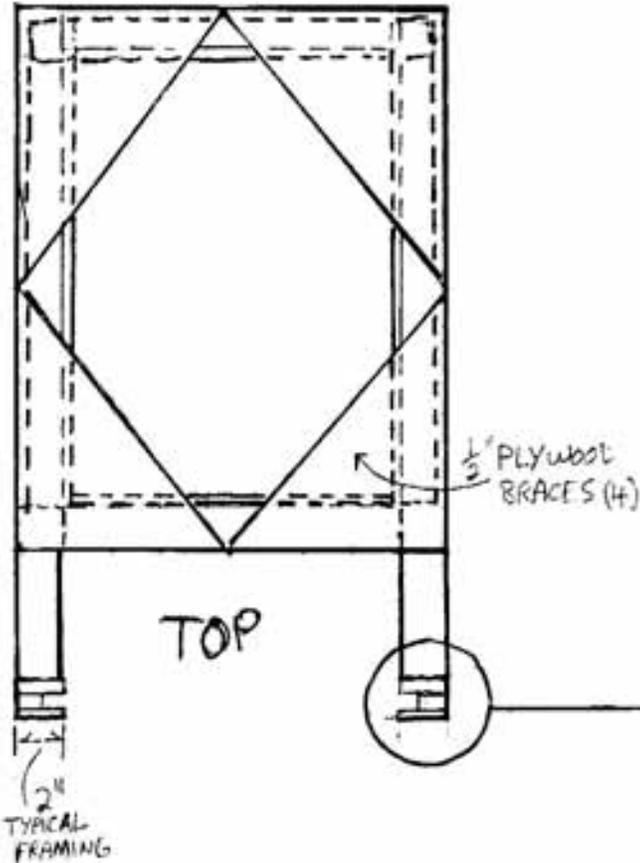
ple house suitable for bobcat, serval, caracal, fishing cat, etc. I frame these houses with treated 2 by 4s ripped in half to make 2 by 2s. The walls are 1/2 inch treated plywood inside and out. The space between the inner and outer walls is filled with 1-inch Styrofoam insulation. The roof is made to fit down over the walls and is

removable for cleaning and to allow for removal of the door baffle in the summer.

I locate the house under a larger shelter that is part of the cage roof to protect the house from weather and reduce radiant heat loss in the winter and to provide shade in the summer. This way the roof can be flat or gently sloped to provide a nice lounging

### HOUSE PLANS WITH ROOF AND BAFFLE REMOVED

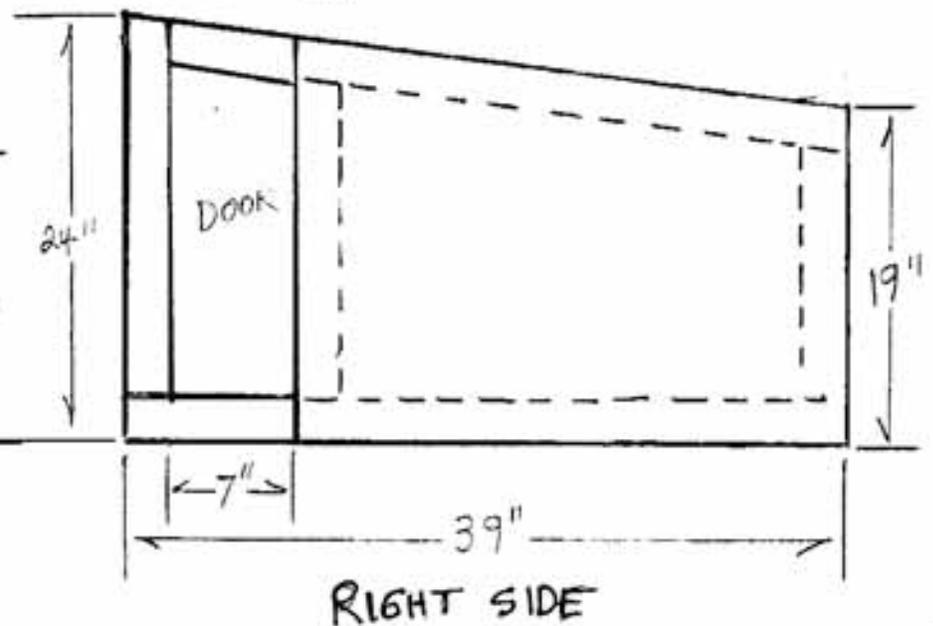
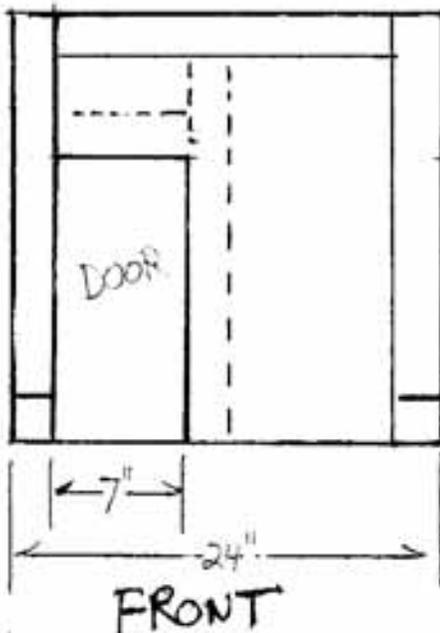
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BAFFLE IS 1/2" PLY APPROX. 24X19" CUT TO SLIDING FIT IN RAIL.



platform and doesn't have to be covered with roofing material that the cats might ingest. If roofing must be applied, use metal and roll the corners under with a needle nose pliers so the cats won't cut themselves on it.

Birthing houses are more complicated. Some have drop doors to lock the mom out and removable hatches in the back for taking the babies. Most of them have some sort of funny looking pyramid shape on the roof. This is to accommodate small security cameras we got from Harbor Freight. They can be mounted inside a one and a quarter inch inside diameter plastic pipe, pointed down through a hole in the center of the roof. The exact shape is determined by the viewing angle of the particular camera. I choose a floor size larger than my heating pad with the same aspect ratio as the camera (in this case 2:3) I cut a piece of cardboard that size, plug the camera into a monitor and hold it over the cardboard at the height that lets me just see the whole piece of cardboard on the monitor. That is the minimum height the camera must be mounted above the floor of the house. •

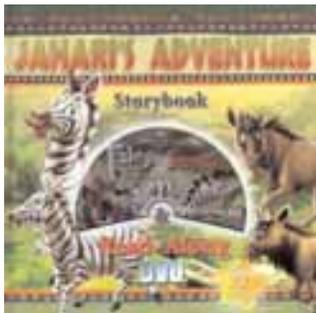


Camera pyramid adorns this birthing house.

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## Building Bart's Baffled Bobcat Bungalow

By Mike Friese

Some cats love cold weather but other cats thrive on more temperate climates. When setting up a habitat for a cat, we need to make sure that its enclosure environment is compatible with its natural environment.

Heated buildings attached to outdoor runs provide an optimum environment for the cat; the cat can decide what temperature it prefers. When a heated building is not practical, there are other measures you can take to make your cat's environment a comfortable one.

I have been visiting a small animal sanctuary in San Diego County, California. The sanctuary is run by Jane Zoeller. (If you look her up on your back-issue DVD, you

will find that she is mentioned as early as 1974.) Her sanctuary is in the mountains near the historic town of Julian so winters are cold, the winds are strong, and it sometimes snows. The sanctuary recently acquired some servals and as a central African cat, they are ill-suited to snow.

Based on the plans that Bart Culver provided in the November/December 2007 issue of the *FCF Journal*, I set out to build one of Bart's bungalows for the servals of Julian.

I closely modeled my enclosure after Bart's plans but I made a few improvements to make the bungalow warmer and to optimize it for servals. The enclosure took me about 12 hours to build but I am sure I

could build a second one much quicker.

The entire bill of materials came to \$90.

The "improvements" I made to Bart's design include:

- 1.5" polystyrene instead of 1". This works out especially well since the 2" x 2" wood used for the skeleton actually measures 1.5" x 1.5". The thicker polystyrene sheets fit perfectly!

- Rather than using a simple sheet of 1" plywood for the base, I made a fully insulated platform using foam sandwiched between 3/8" plywood sheets. With this, all six sides of the bungalow are insulated.

- I insulated the small wall opposite the outer door. It was easy to do, I had extra foam, and it might reduce the radiation



Jane admires completed bungalow (with front baffle in place) as installed at the sanctuary.

losses in that direction.

• I widened the inside doorway from 7" to 10" and increased its height from 16" to the full height of the enclosure. I didn't think a serval could make the 90° turn in the cramped anteroom and fit through a 7" doorway. Also I did not want the serval to

## Bungalow Bill of materials

3 sheets of 3/8" outdoor-rated plywood  
8 2" x 2" x 8' wood  
3 1" x 3" x 8' wood  
1 1" x 2" x 8' wood  
1 4' x 8' sheet of 1.5" polystyrene (Styrofoam) insulation  
1.5 lbs 1-3/8" weatherproof drywall screws  
1 lb 3" weatherproof drywall screws

duck to get past the inside door. These changes make the bungalow a bit less cozy but I hope the thicker insulation and floor compensate.

• I added 1" x 3" furring strips to the seam between the floor and wall to block drafts.

• I added a 2 x 2 piece of wood between the bottoms of the rails where the baffle slides. This keeps the winds from flowing underneath the baffle. The photo in last issue's article shows the baffle completely closing the bottom end so this must be a different design than presented in the plans.

• I used 3/8" plywood instead of 1/2". The bungalow is so small, even the largest sections are quite rigid even with 3/8" plywood.

• I deleted the triangular braces under the roof because the bungalow was sufficiently rigid without them.

When building the bungalow, keep in mind that the bungalow is for cats. Cats do not require furniture-quality workmanship. The bungalow just needs to fit together snugly, offer no leaks, and have no sharp surfaces or splinters to hurt the cat.

I used only drywall screws for the construction. There are several types of drywall screws on the market, but you should use weatherproof screws such as the kind used for decking. The kind I bought appear to be covered with a ceramic. I used a #2 Phillips bit chucked into a conventional electric hand-drill. Why turn a screw by hand when you have power tools?

I had to drill pilot holes for all 3" drywall screws and for the smaller screws when they were driven onto the 1 x 3 and 1 x 2 material. The 2 x 2 material did not split when I drove the smaller drywall screws into it. If you have two drills, you'll want to chuck the pilot hole drill bit in your second drill.

So did the serval like her new home? I received an excited call from Jane the next day. The serval vacated her igloo that night and took up residence in the bungalow. At sunrise the serval was usually up and about pacing, ostensibly to warm up after a chilly night. Instead this morning the serval elected to sleep in; she decided it was too chilly to get out of bed! •

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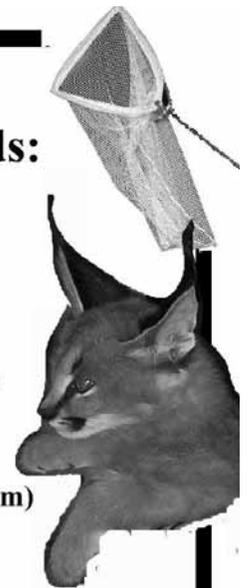
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Left and right side frames.



Sides are attached to the back wall. Slider rails for front baffle are attached to front edge of side walls.



Left and right side frames with polystyrene insulation in place.



Only half of the front wall is open. The other half is insulated with polystyrene.



Left and right walls with sheathing in place. Nowhere is the polystyrene exposed to the cats. See door?



Front wall is sheathed to hide the polystyrene. Bottom stop for the baffle is installed at the lower end of the baffle rails.



Roof likewise is filled with polystyrene.



...filled with foam. Plywood sheathing covers both sides. I recommend covering the floor with linoleum.



Detail showing how the 1 x 3 wood is attached outside the frame to eliminate drafts.



Assembled bungalow with roof and front baffle removed.



The floor is a simple 2 x 2 frame covered in plywood and...



Summer configuration of bungalow. The plywood front baffle can be removed and stored under the roof.