

Martes pennanti
(Fisher)

Order: **Carnivora**

Order Description: **Carnivores**

Family: **Mustelidae**

Family Description: **Weasels, Skunks and Others**

Description:

Fishers are rare in Idaho, but if you should observe one, it looks larger than a marten, almost the size of a small fox, and it has no throat patch. Its longer fur is very dark, black to dark brownish, and often with a grizzled appearance on the face, neck and shoulders. Their legs and feet appear black. They appear stouter than a marten or a weasel. Total length is 31 to 41 inches (790-1033 mm), tail length is 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 16 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches (300-422 mm), and they weigh 3 to 18 pounds (1.4-8.2 kg).

Range:

They occur throughout much of Canada, and south through the Rockies, and in the northern Great Lakes Region and New England. Fishers were extirpated from Idaho, and re-introduced to three, north-central Idaho sites in the early 1960's. They are rare in other parts of Idaho, but little is known about their distribution.

Habitat:

They are found in upland and lowland mixed, [deciduous](#) ^{gt}, or [coniferous](#) ^{gt} forests, but they prefer mixed or coniferous forests. In Idaho, they prefer mature or old-growth coniferous forests with a dense canopy. They seem to favor forested [riparian](#) ^{gt} habitats in spring, summer, and fall, and younger-aged forests in the winter.

Diet:

They mainly prey on other mammals such as small rodents, shrews, squirrels, hares, muskrat, beaver, porcupine, and raccoons. They also feed on deer [carrion](#) ^{gt}, but will also eat birds and fruits. They have a reputation of being predator specialists on porcupines.

Ecology:

Trapping and habitat loss due to logging [extirpated](#) ^{gt} them from their range by the early 1900's. However, reintroduction has established their populations in certain areas. They are active both day and night, but seem more nocturnal in summer and diurnal in winter. In a study in Maine, they were mostly active shortly before sunrise and after sunset; and activity was reduced in winter. When inactive, they occupy dens in tree hollows, under logs, or rocky crevices, or in warmer months they rest in branches of conifer trees. Their home range has been estimated at 10 to 800 km² by snow tracking, and 2 to 75 km² by telemetry. An Idaho study

