

# FISHER

(*Martes pennanti*)

Weasel Family/Carnivore



Fishers are found only in North America and despite its name seldom eats fish. They are one of the few predators of porcupines. To avoid the quills, the fisher attacks the face and head and then eats the porcupine by flipping the dead animal over.



As with most other types of weasels, adult fishers are fierce fighters and are solitary except during mating season. Fishers are secretive and rarely seen but are known for one of their calls, which can sound like a child screaming.

Newborns weigh about 40 grams and have very little fur. Their eyes open at seven weeks of age. Kits begin to be weaned at 8 to 10 weeks and remain in the den for about three months. By the time they are four months old they are fully weaned and able to hunt for themselves. They leave the female between 5 to 8 months of age.

**Special features:** Fishers have brown coats with a black tail and legs. Their slender body allows them to follow prey into hollow trees or burrows in the ground. They have short legs, small rounded ears and long bushy tails. The adult male weighs 3.6 to 5.4 kg and measures 90 to 120 cm including the tail. Females are generally 10 to 25 percent smaller.

The fisher has long sharp teeth and five toes with retractable claws. Large padded paws allow it to walk on top of snow. The fisher is agile in trees but travels mainly on the ground. Like squirrels, fishers can rotate their hind paws 180 degrees, allowing them to grasp limbs and walk or run down trees head first.

**Food:** Snowshoe hares, small rodents, squirrels, birds, porcupines, carrion, birds' eggs, insects, reptiles, amphibians and various fruits and seeds.

**Denning:** Tree hollows, under logs or in rocky crevices, old porcupine dens and cavities in the snow.

**Predators:** Young fishers fall prey to cougars, lynx, bobcats, wolverines, other fishers, red fox, hawks and eagles. Adult fishers are generally safe from predation.



Fishers are well known for preying on porcupines.



Cougars are one of the fisher's predators.

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## Distribution:

All Provinces and Territories except P.E.I. and Newfoundland. Rare in N.W.T., Nunavut, Yukon and Northern B.C.

## Maturity:

1 to 2 years

## Average life span:

4 to 5 years

## Mating:

Late February to May

## Young born:

February to May

## Gestation:

327 to 358 days due to **delayed implantation** (active gestation 30 days)  
1 litter a year/Average 3 kits

## Habitat:

Fishers will live in a variety of forested areas as long as there is sufficient prey and denning/resting sites. They avoid open areas and prefer dense forests.

## Management Issues:

Fishers are aggressive hunters and outcompete their smaller weasel cousins for available food supplies. They help control porcupine populations. When food sources become scarce, they will prey on small domestic animals and poultry.

