Trapper Education in Washington State

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Wildlife Program
Hunter Education Division
June 2020

CODE OF RESPONSIBLE TRAPPING

All responsible trappers should adhere to the following code:

- Respect private property and ask permission from the landowner before the trapping season.
- Know selective and humane trapping systems and use them appropriately.
- Be aware of others using the outdoors and do not interfere with their activities.
- Assist property owners with wildlife damage problems.
- Avoid areas or sets likely to result in the capture of domestic animals.
    - Washington law requires that you release unharmed any trapped wildlife for which the season is not open. Wildlife that cannot be released unharmed must be left in the trap and the Department of Fish and Wildlife must be notified immediately.
- Be a conservationist. Make an effort to trap only the surplus.
- Check traps regularly and preferably in the early morning.
    - Don't set more traps than you can check.
- Dispatch trapped furbearers in a humane manner.
- Promptly report wildlife problems such as disease, pollution, or habitat destruction.
- Identify and record all trap locations accurately.
- Pick up all traps promptly when you have finished trapping.
- Utilize furbearer carcasses for human, domestic animal, or wildlife food whenever possible.
- Dispose of unused carcasses properly.
- Provide educational assistance to new trappers.
- Support strict enforcement of laws relating to wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- Respect the rights and feelings of others, even if you disagree with them.
- Cooperate with wildlife management agencies.

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This publication reflects the work of many entities, including the Washington State Trapper's Association, the National Trapper's Association, the Minnesota Trapper's Association, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Ontario Trapper's Association. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife website (wdfw.wa.gov) was utilized, and a number of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife employees were involved in developing and reviewing this latest edition of *Trapper Education in Washington State*.

Any errors or omissions in this text are the sole responsibility of Hunter Education Division staff, who will appreciate receiving timely notice of your concerns at huntered@dfw.wa.gov

THIS BOOKLET IS FOR INFORMATIONAL AND TRAINING PURPOSES ONLY!

History of Trapping

The fur industry has been important throughout American history. From the first colonists on the Atlantic Coast to modern day American society, trapping has played an important role. The first colonists not only traded for furs but also trapped for fur and food. Modern day trappers help manage wildlife populations and contribute fur to other industries.

The fur industry is big business. In Washington, the fur trade contributed to early settlement of the area. Major fur companies such as the Pacific Fur Company, Hudson Bay Company, and North West Fur Company purchased furs, supported trappers, and encouraged development of fur trading posts and forts. Fort Okanogan, Fort Spokane, Fort Vancouver, and Fort Nisqually were some of the fur trading posts in Washington.

By the 1800s the fur resources were overexploited. The British had overharvested the resource in anticipation of losing control over a large portion of North America. Although the settlement of the west reduced the fur industry, it did not reduce the pressure on furbearers. Many of the new settlers trapped for both fur and food. The addition of more settlers increased the pressure on furbearers.

No regulated trapping seasons allowed settlers to trap and hunt as many furbearers as they pleased. This gold rush mentality caused furbearer populations to drop to dangerously low levels. To ensure their continued survival in Washington State, most furbearers have had managed seasons since the early 1900s. There are currently 28 species that trappers can legally harvest in Washington. These animals are a collection of furbearers, small game animals, and unclassified animals.

Furbearer Management

The department has three management goals for furbearers. They are to:

1. Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage species and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations.
2. Manage wildlife species for a variety of recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes, including hunting, trapping, scientific study, cultural and ceremonial uses by Native Americans, wildlife viewing, and photography.
3. Manage statewide populations for a sustained yield.

Trapping is a management tool the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) employs to ensure the populations of furbearers, small game animals, and unclassified animals do not exceed the carrying capacity and damage the habitat. Many of these animals are carriers of parasites and diseases. Controlled harvesting can, in some cases, reduce the impact of parasites and diseases on other wildlife and domestic animals.

When setting trapping seasons, department staff take into consideration surplus animals, when pelts are in prime condition for market, the number of trappers, and the harvest rate of animals. In situations where the department wants to establish a very limited open season for trapping of a furbearer, but decides season length cannot effectively control the desired low harvest level, a quota system can be used.

Trappers in Washington must buy a license in order to trap. The revenue generated from the sales of licenses and tags to individual hunters, trappers, and anglers makes up about 25% of the department's

budget. The sale of trapping licenses supplies the department with vital information on the numbers and distribution of active trappers in the state. When coupled with harvest figures, the license data can supply valuable information on trends involving trappers.

Carrying Capacity

Carrying capacity is a term that hunters and trappers hear often. It is defined as "the number of animals that the habitat can support throughout the year without damaging the habitat." Good habitat for wildlife has four basic requirements in the proper arrangement. Food, water, cover, and space are all basic requirements to good habitat. Most animals require different things from their habitat, but are generally mingling with other animals that have their habitat needs met in the same areas.

The carrying capacity of a specific area evolves over time, as it is influenced by yearly changes, land use practices, weather, plant succession, and even the numbers and types of wildlife that use the habitat. The concept of carrying capacity is a key factor in regards to wildlife management because a given amount of habitat can only support so many healthy animals.

The number of animals in a specific area can increase in late spring and may continue to rise as food and cover become more abundant. Most of the time, the increased number of animals are new young. As winter approaches and the food declines, the number of animals the habitat can support declines as well. The animals outside the carrying capacity are known as surplus animals.

Wildlife populations commonly fluctuate due to changes in the habitat such as abnormal weather during nesting or breeding periods. Wet or cold spring weather can readily alter the reproductive success of some populations. Changes in the habitat can seriously impact wildlife populations. Animals that survive the winter will determine reproduction for the coming year and the cycle will start again.

Trapping Seasons and Regulations

Successful completion of trapper education training is required to purchase a trapping license. In-person trapper education courses are taught by the Washington State Trappers Association volunteer instructors. A home study option coupled with an in-person written examination is also available.

Trapping in Washington is governed by laws passed by the state legislature, successful public initiatives, and rules (or regulations) adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission. Regulations, including season dates, are published every three years in the trapping pamphlet. It is the responsibility of each trapper to obtain a trapping pamphlet and familiarize themselves with all current rules and seasons prior to trapping. The trapping pamphlet is available online at https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations and selecting Trapping. **The regulations contained in the back of this manual were valid at the time of its printing.**

Be aware, the trapping pamphlet is not a complete list of all the laws and rules associated with trapping. To the right is a list of the current Revised Code of Washington (RCW) laws and Washington Administrative Codes (WAC) that govern trapping. Trappers can check the current RCWs and WACs at http://leg.wa.gov/ by selecting Laws and Rules in the top right corner.

RCWs:	WACs:
77.15.190	220-400-050
77.15.192	220-400-060
77.15.194	220-416-010
77.32.545	220-417-010
77.65.460	220-417-020
	220-417-030
	220-417-040
	220-450-030

Common Trapping Regulations Violations

The most common violations of the trapping regulations are listed below:

Failure to tag traps: All traps must be tagged with a metal tag exhibiting the trappers name and address or an assigned number issued by the department.

Failure to check traps: Nonlethal restraining traps (e.g., cage traps) must be checked within 24 hours of capture. Non-body gripping kill traps such as colony traps, funnel traps, and swim through traps must be checked and animals removed within 72 hours.

Illegal trap: It is unlawful to trap wild animals with body gripping traps during a recreational trapping season. These traps include but are not limited to: Conibear, coilspring, longspring, snares, and jump traps.

Trespass: Always contact landowners and receive permission prior to trapping on their lands.

Trapper's Report

Trapper's Report forms tell wildlife managers the numbers, locations, and species of furbearers harvested. After trapping season has ended each year, individuals who have purchased a trapping license are required to fill out a trapper's report and send it to the department before April 20. Information on trapper reporting is available online at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/trapping/. Trappers can also contact the Wildlife Program customer service desk at 360-902-2515 for more information. A report is required of all trappers who purchased a trapping license, even if they did not harvest any animals. The importance of filling out the trapper's report accurately cannot be stressed enough. The information on the report is important and needed by the department to manage furbearer resources.

Responsible Trapping

The wildlife of Washington is a public resource. The management, harvest, and marketing of furbearers are watched by state and federal agencies, special interest groups, and interested citizens. Washington trappers are a small fraction of the state's total population. This small group of users is sometimes opposed by well-organized and vocal groups who think that trapping is inhumane, unnecessary, and can be a threat to wildlife.

Trappers must accept responsibility for their activities and actions. They must trap legally and ethically, with an understanding of the resource they are harvesting. Trapping laws and regulations are part of a total wildlife management system that provides a flexible working structure to conserve resources as well as allow the harvest of surplus animals.

Trapper's Image

You are the future of trapping. Your activities should show a responsible and ethical approach to trapping. The actions you take and what you say will help the non-trapping public form opinions about trappers and trapping. Remember that trapping is an emotional issue that the majority of the public does not understand. If you think and act responsibly, ethically, and humanely, you will project a good image of trapping. Conservationists and wildlife managers recognize trapping as the most efficient

means of managing some animal populations when it is conducted by responsible trappers. All trappers should follow the trapper's code that is listed on the inside cover of this manual.

Other Wildlife Users

Trappers must accept that they share the wildlife resource with a wide variety of special interest groups. Since furbearers are a public resource and are found in areas where other outdoor activities may be taking place, trappers should be aware of these other activities and plan their sets accordingly. This will help ensure that the traps don't accidently trap a pet. However the cage traps are designed to easily release non-target animals. Also, some of the public may not agree with trapping and might not want to see evidence of the activity. The challenge for all of us is to understand and accept each other's views and uses of our wildlife resources.

Pre-season Preparation

The time to start thinking about trapping is in early autumn. There are many things that must be done before the season opens in November. One of the most important things is to determine where you will be trapping. Whether it is posted or not, all land belongs to somebody. Many federal, state, and timber company lands are open to trapping. If you want to trap on private lands, you must obtain landowner permission, if not already granted. It is up to the trapper to know where they are and ensure they are able to legally trap in the location(s). The department has a webpage detailing places to go hunting at https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations.

Pre-season preparation checklist

- ☐ Buy a trapping license
- ☐ Obtain landowner permission (if private property)
- ☐ Scout for furbearer sign
- ☐ Order trap tags
- ☐ Repair and adjust traps
- ☐ Prepare baits and lures
- ☐ Consult trapping magazines and/or books
- ☐ Study the trapping regulations
- ☐ Check that all vehicles and equipment are in good working order
- ☐ Consideration should be given to getting a tetanus shot

Once the trapper has identified a trapping area and received permission, if privately owned, he or she should start scouting for places to set traps. While prospecting for fur, the trapper should be carefully looking for animal sign like tracks, droppings, feeding areas, burrows, or even hair in fences where animals squeeze underneath. Some trappers tie up bait without traps in a favorite set location to see if furbearers are active in that area. When planning the trapline, a trapper must always remember not to put out a longer line than can be checked within the limit required by law.

Trappers must use either their name and address or WILD ID number on trap tags. You can find your WILD ID on your trapping license. Early autumn is a good time to send away for trap tags, which must be attached to every trap. Most if not all trapping magazines have ads for tags with your name and address stamped on them. Be sure to order tags early enough so they arrive by opening day.

Other chores that can be done before the season include: trap preparation, preparing baits/lures, ensuring motor vehicles are working, sharpening axes and knives, and ensuring all equipment is in good working order.

Some trappers send away for books on trapping or subscribe to a trapping magazine. The more you can learn from these sources before trapping season, the more effective you will be. Trappers also tend to

check a lot of maps since they can show hidden ponds as well as access roads in an area. Many new trappers prefer to buy their lures from a reputable trapper supply house. This is probably a good idea because the quality of a lure can make or break your season.

In late summer, the Washington State Trappers Association has its annual rendezvous in eastern Washington. This event allows trappers to meet and exchange ideas and tricks on the trapline. For information about the Washington State Trappers Association, please see their website at http://www.watrappers.com/.

Make sure to go through the regulations and associated RCWs and WACs. Go through them again and again because it is your obligation to know the laws and rules. You may also want to have a copy on hand when trapping to refer to in the field. Keep it in a waterproof bag or have it laminated to prevent water damage.

Traps

Experienced trappers usually agree that it pays to buy the best traps available. Season after season, top quality traps keep working with only limited maintenance. Cheap traps, on the other hand, often start falling apart after only a few weeks of use. However, cheap traps may be the way to go in areas where traps have been removed or stolen in the past. Remember to be aware of where you are placing traps and what other animals may be using the area. Be familiar with current rules and regulations before you purchase or use any traps!

Cage Traps

Cage traps: These come in many designs. Most are rather costly but will give years of service with a minimum amount of upkeep. If you are handy with tools you can build your own cage traps. A non-target animal can easily be released by just opening the door. It is critical that the trap sits perfectly flat and does not rock when the animal steps into the trap.

Funnel traps: These traps are a cylindrical cage style trap placed in body of water that has two funnels running into the cage area. The funnels are made to expand to allow furbearers in but to close back down and trap them inside. These traps should be set below the water line.

Colony trap: These traps are generally box-style traps that are placed on the bottom of a body of water with two doors, one on each side. The doors are in the down position at time of setting and allow an animal to push open the door and enter the trap. The doors are gravity driven and do not have a trigger mechanism. Colony traps are trapping the entire time they are in the water since the trap is not triggered and does not need to be reset.

Swim-Through trap: These traps are a two door cage style trap submerged in a body of water. They give the impression that the furbearer can swim through, but they trip the closing mechanism when swimming through.

Weasel Box trap: These traps are a solid box with a common rat trap inside. There is a hole only big enough for a weasel to enter. Generally, the box is wood or plastic.

Rat trap: A common rat trap can be used for recreational trapping purposes. These traps are generally used to catch weasels.

Below is a table of various dimensions of cage traps and what furbearers may be caught in each. This table is not a complete list of cage trap sizes and is only meant to illustrate that you can catch many furbearers with many different sizes of traps.

Trap Dimensions	Furbearers it can catch
5 x 5 x 24	Short-tailed and Long-tailed weasel,
6 x 6 x 24	Short-tailed and Long-tailed weasel, Muskrat
7 x 7 x 17	Short-tailed and Long-tailed weasel, Marten, Muskrat, Mink
7 x 7 x 24	Short-tailed and Long-tailed weasel, Marten, Muskrat, Mink
9 x 9 x 24	Short-tailed and Long-tailed weasel, Marten, Muskrat, Mink
9 x 9 x 45	Short-tailed and Long-tailed weasel, Marten, Muskrat, Mink, Raccoon, River otter
10 x 10 x 24	Muskrat, Raccoon, River otter
10 x 12 x 42	Muskrat, Raccoon, River otter, American badger,
11 x 11 x 36	Muskrat, Raccoon, River otter, American badger,
12 x 12 x 36	Muskrat, Raccoon, River otter, American badger,
15 x 15 x 48	Muskrat, Raccoon, River otter, American badger, Beaver, Red fox
15 x 20 x 42	Muskrat, Raccoon, River otter, American badger, Beaver, Red fox, Bobcat
20 x 28 x 72	Muskrat, Raccoon, River otter, American badger, Beaver, Red fox, Bobcat
20 x 26 x 48	Muskrat, Raccoon, River otter, American badger, Beaver, Red fox, Bobcat

Body Gripping Traps

Body gripping traps are not lawful for general season trapping in Washington State. A body gripping trap is defined in RCW 77.15.192 as, “a trap that grips an animal's body or body part. Body gripping trap includes, but is not limited to, steel-jawed leghold traps, padded-jaw leghold or padded foot-hold traps, Conibear traps, neck snares, and non-strangling foot snares. Cage and box traps, suitcase-type live beaver traps, and common rat and mouse traps are not considered body-gripping traps.” Traps that are body gripping may include but are not limited to: longspring traps, coilspring traps, single underspring traps, body-grip, and snares. Body gripping traps may be used on Special Trapping Permits issued by the department. You can apply for a special trapping permit at https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/hunting/trapping.

Trap Preparation
New traps take some preparation before they are ready for the trap line. Many trappers go over them to make sure the triggers work properly and there are no holes in the traps. Trap tags should be attached at this point to ensure each trap has the required information attached to it. A good rule of thumb on trap tags it to attach two tags to each trap, one on top and one on the bottom. This way you are always in compliance with the law.

Trap Modification
Some trappers today choose to make modifications to commercially available traps. However with the cage traps currently legal in Washington State, modifications are not needed. Trap modifications cannot be used to modify a cage trap to become a body gripping device.

Other Trapping Equipment
In addition to traps, there are other pieces of equipment that are just as important on the trapline. This section will identify some of the standard equipment that most Washington trappers utilize. Remember that the following equipment is what has historically worked for most trappers and you need to find what works for you. As with most other pieces of equipment, buying the best quality usually pays off in the long run. Some trapping equipment you may want to invest in includes:

- Hip boots or waders
- Packbasket
- Axe
- Knife
- Pliers
- Digging tool
- Extra trap tags
- Gloves
- Lures and baits
- Rain gear
- Survival gear

Hip boots or waders	Trappers who are working around water will want to invest in hip boots or chest waders. These items are waterproof and will make trapping more comfortable and enjoyable. It is always a good idea to carry an extra pair (if you own multiple pairs) in your vehicle along with an extra set of clothes.
Packbasket	Many trappers carry their traps and animals in a packbasket made of woven wood strips or fiberglass. Both types can be kept clean and relatively odor free by rinsing them out in a stream. Special pouches can be made or bought to be attached to the outside of your packbasket.
Axe	Most trappers prefer a long-handled, single-bladed axe with a head weight of about three pounds.
Knife	A knife is an essential tool for anyone in the outdoors. A pocket knife or belt knife is great for trappers because they are small and light but sharp and effective at small tasks. Remember that blades dull and carrying a sharpener may be a good idea.
Pliers	Trappers will want to have a good pair of pliers, which can be used to repair traps or replace trap tags on the trapline.
Digging tool	Trappers may want to have a digging tool such as a shovel, trowel, hoe, or Pulaski for use in setting their traps. Longer handles on these tools make them more useful, but long handles can stick out of the packbasket and catch low hanging branches.

Extra trap tags	It is imperative to bring extra trap tags. If for some reason a tag is lost, you can replace it and still be legal. Attaching the tag with wire may increase the chances it will stay on the trap. You can also bend and roll the tag onto the handle.
Gloves	Most trappers wear gloves while trapping to keep their scent off their traps and to stay warm and dry. These can be disposable gloves, rubber gloves, or leather gloves. Gloves should stay as free as possible from foreign odor.
Lures and baits	Trapping lures and baits are used to attract furbearers. They are generally a concoction of assorted animal glands and organs or the target animal's favorite foods. You can make your own or purchase commercial lures.
Rain gear	Rain gear will keep you dry in rainy conditions. Trappers should have a rain coat and rain pants unless they are using hip boots/waders. Lightweight materials may not hold up to the rigors of the trapline.
Survival gear	Survival gear is necessary because you are generally off the beaten path. Having some basic survival gear will help keep you alive should you get lost or injured.

Health and Safety

"Stay alert and stay alive." This is a rule that all trappers live by. The trapline is no place for carelessness. Since trappers are usually alone and a long way from medical aid, one accident can spell the end of a trapping season or even worse. All trappers should attend a first aid class long before trapping season opens. These classes are usually offered year round in your local community. A smart trapper carries a basic first aid kit and a survival kit with a fire starter with them as well.

In parts of eastern Washington, trapping through the ice is a common practice. Unfortunately, every year people drown when they break through ice that is too thin to support their weight. Most experts consider three inches of ice the minimum for one person to walk on. Even on three inches of ice, a person must still look out for thin or soft spots caused by current or an underwater spring. When crossing ice, always carry your axe in your hand to help pull yourself out if you break through. One last warning for ice trappers is to never use your hand to feel for traps set through a hole in the ice. If your hand should get caught in the trap under the ice, you may never leave that spot.

There are times when a trapper will have to release a non-target animal from a trap. A non-target animal is any animal that the trapper was not attempting to catch. Non-target animals could include domestic animals or protected wildlife. Remember that any trapped animal is potentially dangerous and should be handled with caution. To release cage trapped animals, just lift the door. If you feel you cannot release the animal without incident, get help.

Trapline Safety Reminders

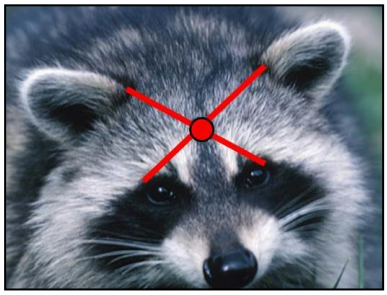
- Stay alert. The trapline is no place for carelessness.
- Before trapping season starts attend a local first aid class.
- Always have a small first aid kit accessible.
- If you have a cell phone, keep it accessible.
- Always carry your axe sheathed and in your hand so you can control it if you fall.
- Know the symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia and know how to avoid and treat them.
- Wear layers of clothes that can be added or removed as the conditions dictate.
- Keep a spare set of dry clothes and shoes in your vehicle.
- Always be careful when traveling on ice.

- If you carry a firearm you should attend a firearm safety course.
- Be sure your vehicle, boat motor, or snowmobile is in top running condition to avoid a long walk or an unplanned night in the woods.
- If you use a snowmobile, always carry snowshoes in case you break down.
- Use a wading staff when crossing rivers or streams.
- Always let someone know where you will be trapping in case an accident occurs.
- When trapping from a boat, follow boating safety rules.

Dispatching Trapped Animals

Due to the nature of the issue and public perception, it is imperative that hunters and trappers use humane methods to dispatch animals. Most of the public does not want to see animals dispatched. Keep this in mind and try to dispatch animals out of sight when in areas with other people. It is illegal to move the trapped animal off of the property in which it was trapped, but you might be able to move to a more secluded part of the property to dispatch the trapped animal.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has published guidelines for the humane euthanasia of animals. Most of the guidelines are intended for euthanasia of domestic animals in a lab or vets office. The AVMA recommendations applicable to the trapline include shooting with a small caliber firearm (usually a .22), the use of gas, or cervical dislocation of the spinal column. While these are standard methods of dispatching most trapped animals, there may be legal or practical situations where they may not be directly applicable.



For large land animals such as badger, bobcat, red fox, and raccoon, the preferred method is to shoot the animal in the head. Proper placement of the bullet to dispatch furbearers is paramount. Draw a line from the outside corners of the eye to the inside corner of the opposite ear. Aim for the intersection of the two lines (red dot), with a very slight downward angle towards the back of the neck.

The use of carbon dioxide gas (CO_2) is a common method. The animal in the trap is placed in a solid box large enough for the animal and the trap. After the lid is placed on the box, the box is filled with CO_2 through a hose from a CO_2 canister. CO_2 is odorless, colorless, and heavier then air. The gas in the box will displace the air and the animal will usually become unconscious in less than a minute. More time will be required for death to occur.

Animals such as beaver, otter, mink, and muskrat are generally trapped in non-body gripping kill sets that trap the animals under water. These traps are legal in Washington State as long as the trap does not grip the animal's body, and once trapped, the animal cannot reach the surface again.

Small land animals such as marten, long-tailed weasels, and short-tailed weasels may be euthanized by cervical dislocation of the spinal column. Using leather gloves to avoid bites, this method involves bending the neck back far enough to dislocate the spinal cord and cause instant death.

There are rare occasions when trappers are put in a difficult position where none of the above methods can be effectively or legally used. These situations could involve trapping animals in a no shooting zone

where discharging a firearm is not allowed. In those areas, trappers should plan to use other methods of dispatching. With advanced planning, these situations can be prevented.

If you would like more information on humane euthanasia, review the AVMA's guidelines for the euthanasia of animals online at https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Pages/Euthanasia-Guidelines.aspx.

Animals on the Trapline

Furbearing animals are animals generally recognized as having a fur coat that is of commercial value. The list of furbearers found in Washington includes: American badger, American beaver, bobcat, ermine, long-tailed weasel, marten, mink, muskrat, raccoon, red fox, and river otter. Trappers can trap unclassified animals as well. These species are: mountain beaver (not part of the beaver family), coyote, European rabbit, gophers (except Mazama pocket gophers, which are protected and cannot be trapped), gray and fox squirrels (except western gray squirrels are protected and cannot be trapped), ground squirrels (except golden-mantled ground squirrels and Washington ground squirrels are protected and cannot be trapped), mice, moles, nutria, Virginia opossum, porcupine, rats, shrews, spotted skunk, striped skunk, voles, and yellow-bellied marmot. Unclassified animals have very low harvest pressure, can be hunted or trapped year round, and are not actively managed by the department.

In this section, the furbearers in Washington are broken into two groups, terrestrial and aquatic. There is also a section that identifies animals that look similar to harvestable animals but cannot be harvested because they are protected. By understanding the animal's food, habitat, and habits, responsible trappers can improve their ability to trap effectively and avoid non-target animals. This section will also give information on how to properly place trapping sets. The trap recommendations in each furbearer section are only suggestions. Many different traps are available and will trap furbearers just as well.

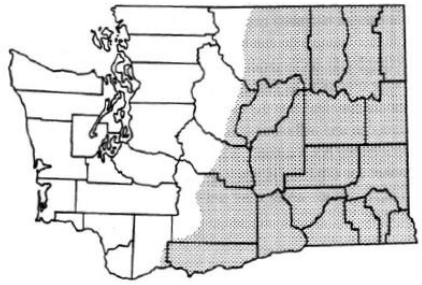
Terrestrial Animals

The following information identifies furbearers in Washington that spend the majority of their time on land.

Badger

The American badger is a mid-sized (10 to 11 pounds) member of the weasel family that uses underground burrows for resting, denning, and catching prey. They forage underground by digging into the burrow systems of prey species, which commonly include ground squirrels, prairie dogs, marmots, and pocket gophers. Badgers also feed on carrion, insects, reptiles, and birds. The current distribution of American badgers includes portions of eastern Washington from the eastern Cascade foothills to the Idaho border. American badgers are generally found in grassland, shrub steppe, desert, dry forest, parkland, and agricultural areas. They require soils that allow the excavation of den sites and support prey species like ground squirrels.

Photo by: M. Danielson (USFS)



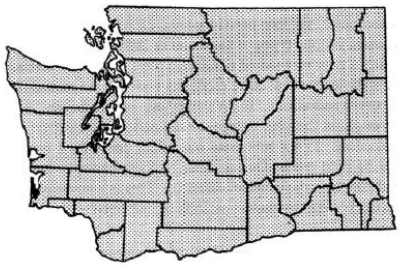
Badger sets:
Trappers generally use a single-door type box trap that is 10” x 12” x 42”. Bait the trap with chicken and attractors such as feathers, eggshells, cotton balls, and/or marshmallows. Traps should be very well built, as badgers are strong and have been known to destroy light traps.

Bobcat

Bobcats are found throughout all of Washington and are probably more common than most people realize. Bobcats appear to be using suburban settings more often, although due to their reclusive ways, they are not often seen. Adult male bobcats weigh 20 to 30 pounds and average three feet in length. Females are considerably smaller and may weigh less than a large house cat. Bobcats can be various shades of buff and brown, with dark brown or black stripes and spots on some parts of the body. Bobcats are opportunistic and will prey upon a wide variety of animals. Food sources include mice, voles, rabbits, gophers, mountain beaver, yellow bellied marmots, insects, reptiles, birds, and carrion. Bobcats of eastern Washington tend to be a much lighter buff color than those of western Washington. Both color phases occur along the eastern side of the Cascade Mountains.

Photo by: Mark Ballinger

Rock cliffs, outcroppings, and ledges are important to bobcats for shelter, raising young, and resting sites. Large brush or log piles and hollow trees or logs are used in wooded areas. Finding bobcats in open fields, meadows, and agricultural areas is not uncommon, provided enough brushy or timbered areas for escape cover is nearby. Bobcats occur less frequently in areas of deep winter snow. Unlike lynx, bobcats have relatively small feet and snow greatly reduces their mobility and ability to catch prey.



The home range size of bobcats in western Washington varies from 2.5 to six square miles for adult males and about half that for adult females. Home range size in eastern Washington tends to be larger. Hunters can also harvest bobcat during the bobcat hunting season. A hunter needs to have a small game license to hunt bobcat. Anyone who harvests a bobcat has to contact a WDFW Regional Office to have the hide sealed within 20 days of the close of the hunting or trapping season. The hide must not be frozen so a seal can be attached. When having the hides sealed, the WDFW staff member will ask the following information:

- Date of harvest
- Method of harvest
- Animals sex
- If the animal was an adult or juvenile
- Which county and GMU it was trapped

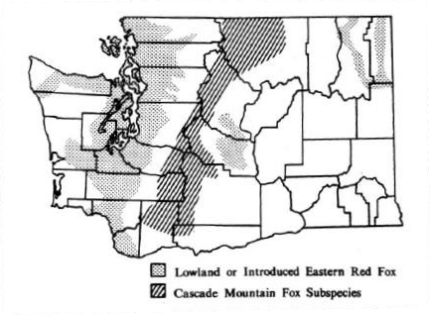
Bobcat sets:
Trappers generally use a single-door type box trap that is 15” x 20” x 42”. Bait the trap with poultry or rabbit carcasses and feathers for a sight attractor. Set the trap in the vicinity of an animal kill or a travel way to and from cover. Use brush or grass on the top and sides of the trap to give the appearance of a natural "cubby" or a recess in a rock outcrop or in brush. Cover the cage bottom with soil.

Red Fox

Adult red fox stand about 14 inches at the shoulder and average three feet in length. They have erect, relatively large, pointed ears and a long, pointed muzzle. Adult males weigh 10 to 15 pounds and adult females weigh slightly less. Their prey is generally snowshoe hares, mice, voles, shrews, moles, ground squirrels, tree squirrels, pikas, rats, chipmunks, small birds, beetles, grasshoppers, berries, some grasses and carrion of deer, elk, and other animals. In addition, fox may eat opossum, young raccoon, skunks, housecats, dogs, weasels, mink, muskrats, and bird eggs. Red fox are opportunistic predators, taking whatever food is available and easily caught.

Photo by: John Thompson

The home range of red foxes averages about one to three square miles. There is a greater population in western Washington and the Cascade mountains than in eastern Washington. Hunters can also harvest fox during the fox hunting season. The hunter needs to have a small game license to hunt fox.



Fox sets:
Trappers generally use a single-door type box trap that is 15” x 15” x 48”. Bait the trap with tainted meat, eggs placed in a nest, marshmallows, and/or cotton balls. Take precautions to eliminate human scent from the trap and the area around the trap. Place bait in a hole dug under the rear of the trap. Cover all sides of the trap with a tarp or other material. Sift dirt onto the bottom of the cage to cover the wire bottom.

Marten

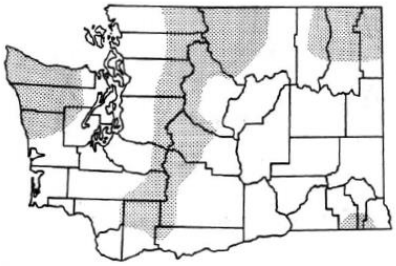
Pacific martens are a small to mid-sized (0.9 to 3.3 pounds) forest carnivore in the weasel family. Pacific martens are terrestrial, arboreal, and forage in and underneath the snow. They are prey generalists and feed on a variety of small mammals, birds, insects, carrion, and berries.

This species uses cavities in large woody structures (e.g., live trees, snags, logs, log piles, stumps) and talus for resting and denning. Despite their small size, they use relatively large home ranges (0.8 to 10.5 square miles).

Martens occur in boreal forest and taiga ecosystems, as well as mid- and high-elevation forests in mountainous regions at more southern

Photo by: WDFW

latitudes. The coastal and Humboldt martens are the exceptions to this, as they use lower elevation forests. The fisher, a protected species, has been confused with marten in the past. Make sure to clearly identify the species before you harvest it.



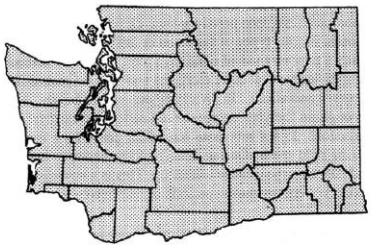
Marten sets:
Trappers generally use a single-door type box trap that is 7” x 7” x 17”. Bait the trap with fresh bloody meat such as chicken or rabbit. Use sight attractors like feathers or fur. Wrap the cage trap in something dark because marten like to investigate dark holes. However, marten seem to like a set in which the back looks like it might be open.

Raccoon

The raccoon is a native mammal that measures about three feet long, including its 12-inch, bushy, ringed tail. Adult raccoons weigh 15 to 40 pounds. Raccoons will eat almost anything, but are particularly fond of creatures found in water—clams, crayfish, frogs, fish, and snails. Raccoons also eat insects, slugs, carrion, birds, and bird eggs, as well as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. Around humans, raccoons often eat garbage and pet food. Although not great hunters, raccoons can catch young gophers, squirrels, mice, and rats.

Photo by: Connie Christensen

Raccoons prefer forest areas near a stream or water source, but have adapted to various environments throughout Washington. Raccoon populations can get quite large in urban areas due to hunting and trapping restrictions, few predators, and human-supplied food. Hunters can also harvest raccoon during the raccoon hunting season. The hunter needs to have a small game license to hunt raccoon.



Raccoon sets:
Trappers generally use a single-door type box trap that is 10” x 12” x 42”. Bait the trap with fish-flavored cat food, corn, ripe bananas, bacon, sardines, peanut butter, jelly, and/or marshmallows. Place the trap where the animal, or evidence of the animal, has been seen or at its den entrance.

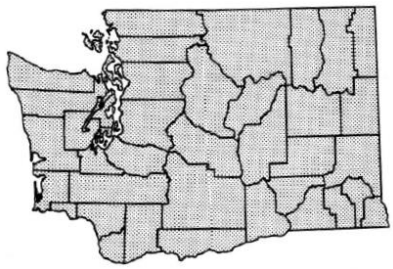
Long-tailed Weasel

The long-tailed weasel is the second smallest member of the weasel family found in Washington. The primary food of long-tailed weasels is small mammals, predominantly rodents. Small mammals that weasels eat include shrews, voles, young cottontail rabbits, mice, woodrats, rats, tree squirrels, chipmunks, ground squirrels, snowshoe hares, pikas, and moles.

Photo by: Melanie Olds / USFWS

Long-tailed weasels are widely distributed and found throughout Washington. A factor limiting distribution of long-tailed weasels is availability of water. When water is available, they may be found

in a variety of habitats including brushland, open timber, brushy edges of fields, grasslands, swamps, rock piles, talus slopes, woodpiles, junk piles, and in and around buildings. Home ranges are between 29.7 and 39.5 acres, with males home ranges being larger than females. Generally, brown phase weasels are less sought after by fur buyers than white phase weasels.



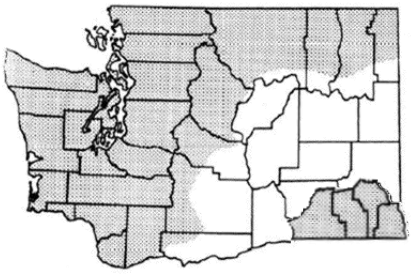
Long-tailed weasel sets:
Trappers generally use a single- or double-door type box trap that is 5” x 5” x 24”, common rat traps, and weasel boxes. Bait the trap with fish, fresh chicken liver, and/or chicken entrails. Set the trap in an old brush pile, under an outbuilding, or under a fence, since the long-tailed weasel is likely to investigate any small covered area.

Short-tailed Weasel (Ermine)

Photo by: Robb Hannawacker

In addition to the common name of weasel, short-tailed weasels are also called ermine. Typically male ermine are larger than females. The total length of adult male ermine averages 8 to 13 inches including the 2.8 to 4 inch tail. The smaller females average 7 to 11 inches in total length including 1.6 to 2.7 inches of tail. Adult males weigh 2.5 to 6.8 ounces and adult females weigh one to three ounces. Small mammals such as voles, shrews, mice, snowshoe hares, pikas, bushy-tailed woodrats, gophers, young cottontail rabbits, rats, chipmunks, and ground squirrels make up the diet of ermine. During periods of deep snow, ermine will burrow through and hunt under the snow. They will often hunt for mice in their burrows.

Ermine are active year round. Recent studies show that ermine hunt primarily during the day throughout summer and during the night throughout winter. They are more restricted in their distribution in Washington than long-tailed weasels. They are found throughout western Washington, on the east slope of the Cascade Mountains, and in the Blue Mountains in south-eastern Washington as well as the northern one third of Eastern Washington. Ermine are found primarily in higher elevations. Generally brown phase weasels are less sought after by fur buyers than white phase weasels.



Short-tailed weasel (ermine) sets:
Trappers generally use a single- or double-door type box trap that is 5” x 5” x 18”, common rat traps, and weasel boxes. Bait the trap with fish, fresh chicken liver, and/or chicken entrails. Set the trap in an old brush pile, or under an outbuilding or fence, since the weasel is likely to investigate any small covered area.

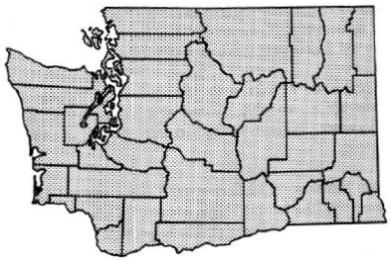
Aquatic Animals
The following information identifies furbearers in Washington that spend the majority of their time in water.

Beaver

Beavers are the largest living rodents in North America, with adults averaging 40 pounds and measuring more than three feet in length, including the tail. Beavers eat the leaves, inner bark, and twigs of aspen (a favorite food), alder, birch, cottonwood, willow, and other deciduous trees. Beavers also eat shrubs, ferns, aquatic plants, grasses, and crops including corn and beans. When the surface of the water is frozen, beavers eat bark and stems from a food "cache" (a safe storage place) they have anchored to the bottom of the waterway for winter use. They also swim out under the ice and retrieve the thick roots and stems of aquatic plants, such as pond lilies and cattails.

Photo by: Laura Rogers

Beavers are found where their preferred foods are in good supply along rivers and/or in small streams, lakes, marshes, and even roadside ditches containing adequate year-round water flow. In areas where deep, calm water is not available, beavers that have enough building material available will create ponds by building dams across creeks or other watercourses and impounding water.



Beaver sets:
Trappers generally use a suitcase type trap or a swim through type trap. Bait the trap with freshly cut tree sprouts or branches, and/or commercial lures. Some success has also come from using a four foot long cage trap set right at the water's edge next to a beaver slide.

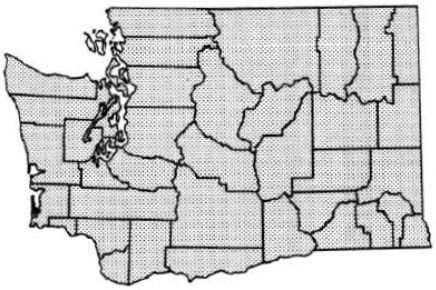
Mink

Adult male mink weigh 2 to 3.5 pounds and are typically larger than adult females, which weigh 1.5 to 4 pounds. The total length of adult males ranges from 23 to 28 inches compared to 18 to 23 inches for adult females. Although they are primarily nocturnal, mink may occasionally be seen during day. Mink will eat nearly anything they can kill. Strictly carnivorous, mink will feed on fish, muskrat, mountain beaver, small rodents, carrion, and rabbits. Mink may travel some distance from water when hunting.

Photo by: Keith Nelson

Male mink will maintain a home range of two to three square miles. Although travel is usually restricted to within 1,000 feet of a den, adult males are capable of traveling long distances in a single night's hunt. Adult females maintain home ranges of about one square mile or about half the size of adult male home ranges. Excellent swimmers capable of catching fish, mink readily enter the water when traveling, hunting, in pursuit of prey, or for escape. In some areas that completely ice over, mink may use dens with underwater entrances and do much of their hunting under the ice. Mink are found throughout

Washington near most streams and bodies of water. A semi-aquatic animal, mink prefer habitat near swamps, marshes, streams, rivers, lakes, ditches, canals, or ponds.



The fisher, a protected species, has been confused with mink in the past. Make sure to clearly identify the species before you harvest it.

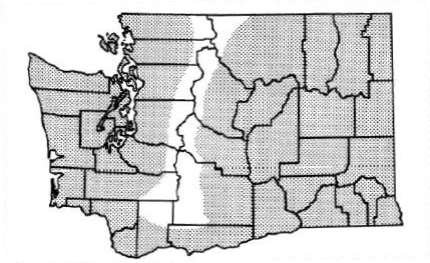
Mink sets:
Trappers generally use a single-door type box trap that is 7” x 7” x 17” or swim through traps. Bait the trap with fresh bloody meat such as chicken or rabbit and you can use sight attractors like feathers or fur. Wrap the cage trap in something dark because mink like to investigate dark holes.

Muskrat

Muskrats weigh 2 to 4 pounds and reach lengths of 18 to 25 inches, including their 8- to 11-inch, sparsely haired tails. Their coat color is generally dark brown, but individuals can range from black to almost white. Muskrats eat a wide variety of plants, including cattails, sedges, bulrush, arrowhead, water lilies, pondweed, and ferns. They also eat alfalfa, clover, corn, and other crops if muskrats find them in their territories. Muskrats normally feed within 150 feet of their main dwellings, but they will travel much farther in search of food.

Photo by: John White

Muskrats are found throughout still or slow-moving waterways, including marshes, beaver ponds, reservoirs, irrigation canals and ditches, and marshy borders of lakes and rivers. They don’t live in mountainous areas where cold weather makes their food unobtainable.



Muskrat sets:
Trappers generally use a single-door type box trap that is 6” x 6” x 20”. Trappers are also very successful in using colony traps, swim through traps, and funnel traps. Bait the trap with corn, carrot greens, sweet apples, or cattail roots. Place the trap just outside the burrow and partially in the water, taking every precaution that the captured muskrat will not be under water and will be able to breathe. Conceal the cage trap well with grass or leaves. A short line of bait leading to the entrance of a trap will increase capture success.

River Otter

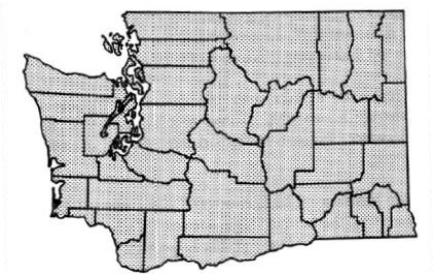
River otters average four feet in length, including the tail, and weigh 20 to 28 pounds. Female adults are somewhat smaller than males. River otters are opportunists, eating a wide variety of food items, but mostly fish. River otters usually feed on 4- to 6-inch long, slowly moving fish species, such as carp, mud minnows, stickle backs, and suckers. However, otters actively seek out spawning salmon and will travel far to take advantage of a salmon run.

Photo by: Keith Nelson

Although seldom seen, river otters are relatively common throughout Washington in ponds, lakes, rivers, sloughs, estuaries, bays, and in open waters along the coast. In colder locations, otters frequent areas that remain ice-free in winter—rapids, the outflows of lakes, and waterfalls. River otters avoid polluted waterways, but will seek out a concentrated food source upstream in urban areas. River otters can be found in fresh, brackish, or salt water, and can travel overland for considerable distances. The fisher, a protected species, has been confused with river otter in the past. Make sure to clearly identify the species before you harvest it.

Anyone who harvests a river otter has to contact a WDFW Regional Office to have the hide sealed within 20 days of the close of the trapping season. The hide must not be frozen so a seal can be attached. When having the hides sealed, the WDFW staff member will ask the following information:

- Date of harvest
- Method of harvest
- Animals sex
- If the animal was an adult or juvenile
- Which county and GMU it was trapped



River otter sets:
Trappers generally use a single-door type box trap that is 10” x 12” x 42”, and swim through traps. Bait the trap with fresh fish. Cover the bottom of the trap with sand. River otters may be trapped in suitcase type traps used to capture beavers. Modify the sides so the otters can't escape.

Protected Animals
There are animals protected in Washington State that closely resemble furbearers, game animals, and unclassified animals. Below is detailed information on animals that may have historically been described as furbearers. They are: fisher, Canadian lynx, wolf, and wolverine. These species are protected, therefore, NO HARVEST IS ALLOWED. The animals are presented in this manual to ensure trappers can distinguish between legal animals and protected animals. For more information please see the WDFW website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/endangered/.

Canadian Lynx

Canadian lynx are a protected species in Washington State. Sightings of Canadian lynx and their sign are documented and verified when possible. The lynx is generally between 11 and 38 pounds and occurs only in the boreal forests of North America. Lynx are prey specialists because snowshoe hares make up the bulk of their diet. They are physically adapted to forage for snowshoe hares in deep snow.

Lynx once occurred throughout the northern counties of Washington but are now largely restricted to a single area that encompasses western Okanogan, northern Chelan, and eastern Whatcom and Skagit counties. The size of the lynx population in this area was estimated at approximately 54 animals in 2016.

Photo by: WDFW

Lynx occupy subalpine and boreal coniferous forests that have substantial accumulations of snow during the late fall, winter, and early spring. In Washington, lynx habitat includes Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, and subalpine fir forests at or above 4,600 feet in elevation. Lynx typically hunt for snowshoe hares in early successional forest habitats where hares are most abundant. Females commonly use mature forest stands for denning and their den sites are often located in tangled piles of fallen trees.

Fisher

Fishers are a protected species in Washington State. Sightings of fishers and their sign are documented and verified when possible. Fishers are a mid-sized carnivore (4.4 to 13 pounds) in the weasel family that use forested habitats. They commonly prey upon small and mid-sized mammals, such as snowshoe hares, squirrels, mice, and voles. They also feed on ungulate carrion, fruit, insects, and birds. Fishers are known for their ability to prey upon porcupines. Fishers use uncharacteristically large home ranges for an animal of their size (average sizes are more than 19 square miles in northern portions of its range), with male home ranges typically being twice as large as those of females. Large trees, large snags, and large logs with cavities are important habitat features and are commonly used as rest sites and den sites.

Photo by: J. Hoder

Fishers occur only in the boreal and temperate forests of North America. Fishers inhabit coniferous and mixed coniferous-deciduous forests and they tend to avoid areas with significant human activity and developed areas. Home ranges are commonly characterized by a mosaic of forest stand ages in low to mid-elevation forest landscapes, and these mosaics tend to be dominated by forests with mid-sized to large diameter trees. Fishers are consistently associated with forests that provide moderate to high canopy closure and the presence of large woody structures such as cavity trees, snags, and logs.

Fishers were lost from the state in the early to mid-1900s and have only recently been reintroduced to the Olympic Peninsula and Cascade Mountain Range in Washington. Because they are a poorly known species and have been missing from the state for many years, they are often confused with more common species including mink, marten, and river otter. Fishers are dark brown, with a lighter grizzling (i.e., white and light brown hair mixed with the dark brown hair) on their face, head, and shoulders. They have rounded ears, large feet, and a long tail that makes up about 40 percent of their body length. Mink are smaller than fishers, and they have small rounded ears, a shorter tail, small feet, and most have a patch of white on their chin. Marten are also smaller, are a lighter brown color, and have a proportionately shorter tail. River otters are similar in length but are a lighter brown color, have a rounded nose/snout, have small ears, and are much stockier than fishers.

The department is currently monitoring the fisher's expansion into habitat that they formerly used in Washington. Fishers are easily incidentally captured in traps set for other species. If you trap a fisher by mistake, the department would appreciate you getting some photos or video of the fisher before promptly releasing it. After releasing the fisher, please check the trap to see if it left any hair or droppings. The department would like to get samples left in the trap for DNA analysis. Please prepare the samples per the instructions below.

Hair – Place any hair in a paper envelope to allow the hair follicles to dry. Lined envelopes or plastic envelopes will not allow the hair to dry and this will damage the sample.

Droppings – Place the droppings in a plastic bag. Note the collection location and date on the bag and then freeze the droppings. This will allow the department to thaw and properly dry the sample before extracting DNA.

Contact Jeff Lewis at jeffrey.lewis@dfw.wa.gov or by phone at 360-902-2374 to discuss how to get the samples to the department for testing.

Wolf

Wolves are a protected species in Washington State. Sightings of wolves and their sign are documented and verified when possible. Gray wolves are highly social and form packs consisting of a breeding male and female, pups from the current year and previous years, and sometimes other individuals. Typical pack size in the northern U.S. Rockies is five to 10 animals. Packs defend territories that generally average 193 to 386 square miles.

Wolves are carnivores and feed primarily on hoofed mammals. Elk, deer, and moose are the main prey in western North America, with other ungulates (e.g., bison, bighorn sheep, caribou), beavers, and smaller animals are eaten to a lesser extent. Wolves are also natural scavengers and readily feed on the carcasses of dead animals. As top-level predators, gray wolves influence the abundance and behavior of their prey and other predators, which in turn can affect vegetation patterns, occurrence of other wildlife, and other ecological processes. About 10 to 15 percent of the members of a population are comprised of younger solitary animals dispersing from their natal pack to seek a mate, vacant habitat, or another pack to join. Dispersal distances average 37 to 62 miles but occasionally exceed 180 miles.

Photo by: David Mozkowitz

Wolves are habitat generalists and can thrive in almost any habitat (i.e., forests, prairies, swamps, mountains, deserts, and tundra) with sufficient prey and limited human-caused mortality. In western North America, the species is generally found in forests and nearby open habitats characterized by lower elevations and gentle terrain, especially during winter.

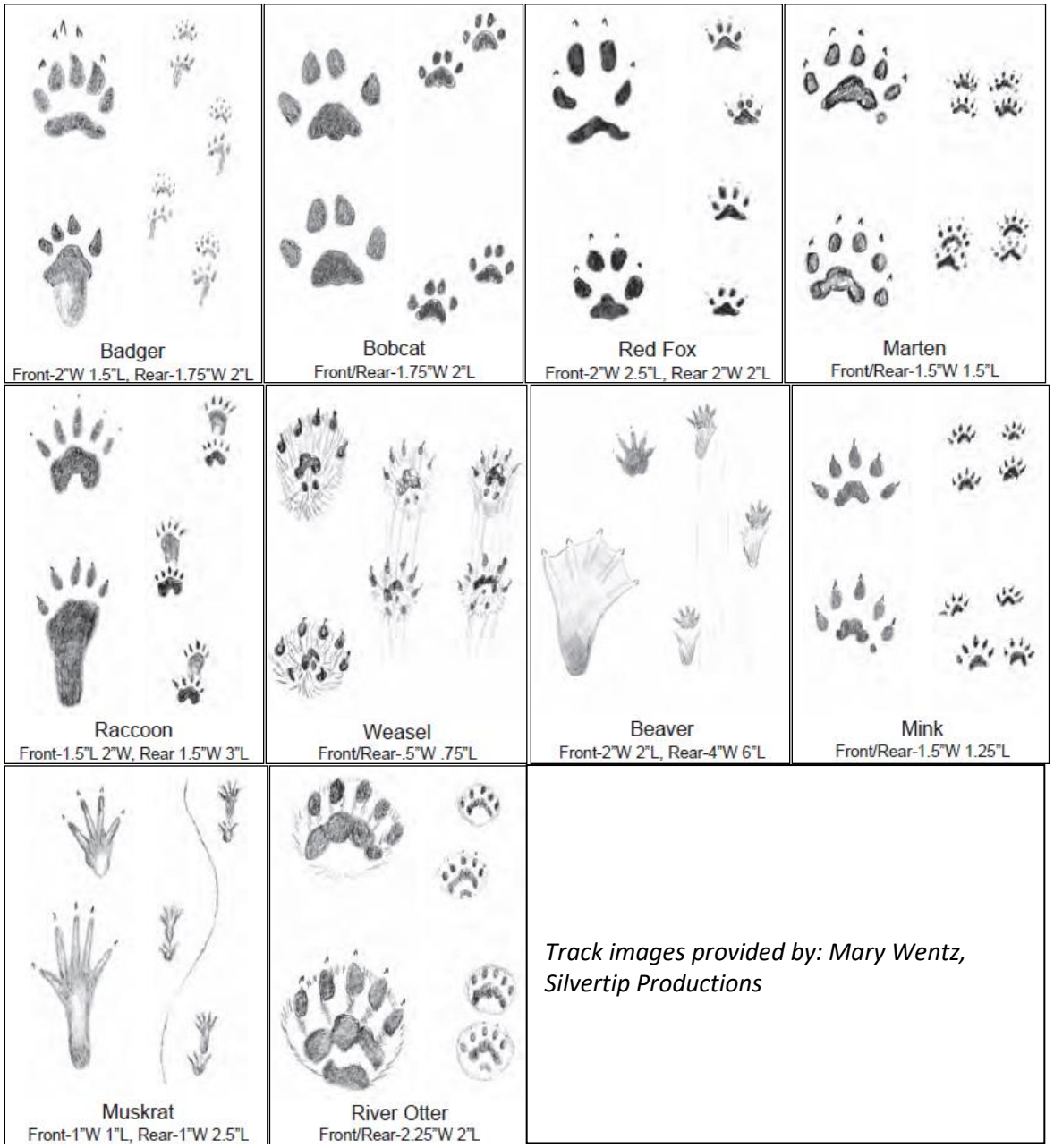
Wolverine

Wolverines are a protected species in Washington State. Sightings of wolverines and their sign are documented and verified when possible. The wolverine is a wide-ranging carnivore and the largest terrestrial member of the weasel family. Wolverines are prey generalists and commonly feed on small and mid-sized mammals and ungulate carrion. For an animal of their size (18 to 33 pounds in Washington), wolverines use very large activity areas (i.e., 77 to 770 square miles).
Wolverines occur in the remote mountainous areas of the Cascades and in northeastern Washington. Wolverines avoid humans and developed areas, and have recently been detected near Mt. Adams

Photo by: Jeff Lewis

and in the Goat Rocks Wilderness in the South Cascades. In Washington, wolverines occupy alpine and subalpine-forest habitats, especially within North Cascades National Park and the wilderness areas of Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. If you happen to come across a wolverine or catch one in your sets, please take pictures or video if you can and send them to Jeff Lewis at jeffrey.lewis@dfw.wa.gov or by phone at 360-902-2374.

Furbearer Tracks



Track images provided by: Mary Wentz, Silvertip Productions

Furbearer Diseases and Parasites

Any successful trapper will come into direct contact with a variety of wildlife. It is important that trappers recognize the potential for contracting diseases from infected animals. Diseases in trapped animals are caused by viruses, bacteria, parasites, or fungi. Diseases in wild populations are not uncommon and in some instances may reach epidemic proportions. A person who believes he or she may have contracted any of the below diseases or parasites should consult with a physician as soon as possible and explain to the doctor the possible sources of infection. These illnesses are covered in here to make you aware that they are found in Washington's furbearers, but contraction of these illnesses is rare. For more information, visit the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/diseasesconditions/.

Tips for Handling Diseased Animals

- Do not handle any wildlife found dead from no apparent cause.
- Use rubber gloves while handling and skinning wild animals, especially if you have cuts or scratches on your hands.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water after handling wild animals.
- Consider dusting or spraying furbearers with insecticide by first placing the whole animal in a plastic bag to contain fleas.
- Report any observations of sick or dead wildlife to the department online https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/a384e90f69744f2e846135a9ce80027f or by email at wildlifehealth@dfw.wa.gov.
- When you consult a doctor for an illness, be sure to explain your direct contact with wild animals.

Furbearer Diseases

Eleven diseases that may present a hazard to trappers include rabies, tularemia, plague, sarcoptic mange, raccoon roundworm, toxoplasmosis, leptospirosis, yersiniosis, echinococcus granulsosus, distemper, and tick borne diseases. Trappers should report any observations of sick or dead wildlife to the department online https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/a384e90f69744f2e846135a9ce80027f or by email at wildlifehealth@dfw.wa.gov.

Rabies

Rabies is caused by a virus which infects the nervous system of mammals. In Washington, bats are the primary animals that carry rabies. While rabid raccoon, skunks, foxes, and coyotes have not been identified in the state, the virus can be transmitted from bats to these mammals. Transmission of the rabies virus to humans is almost always from the saliva of the infected animal as a result of a bite. The symptoms are similar to the flu and may persist for days. If you suspect you may have come in contact with or if you are bitten and believe the animal had rabies, either confine the animal or kill it without damaging the head. Save the head for health officials to examine since this is the only way to determine if the animal did in fact have rabies.

If a trapper suspects exposure to a rabid animal, they should contact their local health department who will help determine exposure, arrange treatment if necessary, and test the animal. If you have to touch a suspected rabid carcass make sure to use disposable gloves and dispose of them properly afterward. For more information see the DOH Rabies webpage at http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/IllnessandDisease/Rabies.

Tularemia

Tularemia is a disease caused by bacteria. Many species of animals can be infected by this disease, including humans. In Washington, tularemia is most often found in beaver, muskrat, and rabbits. A human who contracts tularemia commonly has a high temperature, headache, body ache, nausea, and sweating. A mild case may be confused with the flu and inadvertently ignored.

Tularemia is transmitted in a variety of ways. The bacteria may be contracted by drinking contaminated water or by eating insufficiently cooked meat from infected animals. Blood sucking ticks or deer flies may also spread the disease. With trappers, the disease is usually transmitted by direct contact with the carcass of an infected animal and the bacteria enter a cut or scratch. Trappers handling beaver, muskrat, and rabbits should wear disposable rubber gloves and wash their hands well when finished. If you get sick immediately after handling one of these species notify your health care provider.

Plague

Plague is a bacterial disease that is carried by rodents such as ground squirrels and wood rats. Transmission of the disease is usually by fleas. Carnivores such as coyotes and bobcats become infected by feeding on infected animals, from bite wounds from infected animals, or by bites from infected fleas. Although infected coyotes do not usually become sick, bobcats have much less tolerance and may die from plague. Humans are also susceptible to the disease. Trappers run the risk of contracting plague from a carrier flea from a trapped furbearer or by handling a diseased animal with hands that are cut or scratched.

Symptoms of plague include fever, restlessness, confusion, and pain surrounding swollen lymph nodes. It is important to consult a doctor promptly and explain your contact with any wild animals. Failure to treat the illness with antibiotics can be fatal.

Sarcoptic Mange

Mange is most prevalent in coyotes and red fox. Mange is caused by a parasitic mite that causes extreme irritation when it burrows into the skin. Early symptoms of mange in furbearers are a flaking and cracking of the skin accompanied by hair loss. Transmission of the disease is by direct contact with infected animals. It is difficult for a trapper to contract mange from an infected wild animal. However, mites can burrow into your skin and then die, causing severe itching for several weeks.

Raccoon Round Worm

Raccoon round worm is a common intestinal parasite and is an important cause of fatal nervous systems disease, eye disease, and other problems in various wild and domestic animals. The eggs of this parasite are passed in the raccoon's feces. Other animals and human beings are infected through accidental ingestion of eggs. In other animals and human beings the eggs hatch and the larvae undergo a very aggressive migration to the brain, eyes, and other tissue causing severe damage and in some cases, death. The disease can be prevented by always washing your hands after handling live raccoons, traps, and particularly after having been in an area where raccoon feces have accumulated. Raccoon traps should also be cleaned and boiled after use to kill any eggs which may be attached.

Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis is caused by a single-celled parasite called Toxoplasma gondii oxoplasmosis. In the Pacific Northwest (British Columbia), raccoons have been shown to have high prevalence of T. gondii. People can become infected with Toxoplasma by eating undercooked, contaminated meat, accidental ingestion

of undercooked meat after handling it and not washing hands thoroughly, drinking water contaminated with T. gondii, or accidentally swallowing the parasite through contact with infected feces.

When illness occurs, it is usually mild with "flu-like" symptoms (e.g., tender lymph nodes, muscle aches, etc.) that last for weeks to months and then go away.

Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis (lepto) is caused by bacteria that are spread most often through the urine of infected animals. The most common mechanism of infection in people is by direct contact with an environment that has been contaminated with urine from an infected animal. The bacteria enter the body through skin through a cut/scratch or through the eyes, nose, or mouth. In Washington, lepto is found often in raccoons, skunks, mice, rats, and squirrels. Some marine mammals and fish may also carry the bacteria that cause leptospirosis.

A human who contracts leptospirosis most often has very high fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, vomiting, yellow skin/eyes (jaundice), abdominal pain, diarrhea, and potentially a rash. Some infected people may have no symptoms at all.

Yersiniosis

Yersiniosis is a bacterial infection that is most often caused by eating undercooked meat. In Washington, Yersiniosis is associated primarily with larger rodents. Symptoms of Yersiniosis in humans include fever, severe abdominal pain (similar to appendicitis), and diarrhea.

Echinococcus granulsosus

Echinococcus granulsosus is a parasitic tapeworm. E. granulosus in Washington has been found in elk in western Washington and wild canids are the likely definitive hosts in these cases. Prevention measures should include avoiding fecal matter from canids (wild and domestic) and washing hands after handling canids, especially coyotes. Most human infections are asymptomatic (no clinical signs or illness), but it can also cause slowly enlarging masses in the liver or lungs.

Distemper

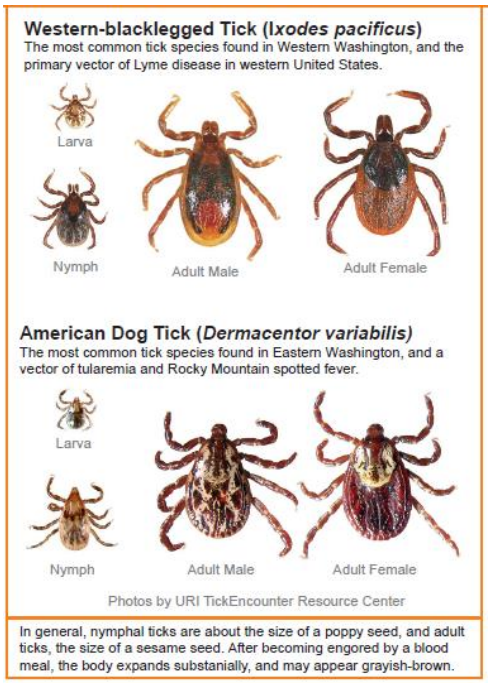
The virus that causes distemper in wildlife is not known to infect humans. However domestic dogs and cats may be able to contract distemper from infected furbearers if they have direct contact. In Washington, distemper is not uncommon in coyotes, foxes, raccoons, skunks, and mustelids (mink, otters, martens, etc.).

Tick-borne diseases

Ticks feed on birds, deer, other game animals, and people too. A tick’s bite can spread serious and potentially deadly diseases. One of the most common diseases they spread is Lyme disease. Hunting brings you in to tick habitat, so take precautions to avoid being bitten.

- Before you go, treat clothing and hunting gear with permethrin. Always follow product instructions.
- Wear long-sleeved shirt and long pants. Tuck shirt into pants and wear gaiters over pant legs and boots to limit access to your skin.
- Watch for ticks when transporting and dressing deer or other game.

- Ticks may drop off the animals to find a new source of blood.
- Check yourself often for ticks, and remove them immediately. Ticks can be small and hard to see or feel. Look carefully on all parts of the body. Ticks tend to hide around the head, neck, ears, and body folds such as armpits, behind knees, and groin.
- Take a shower or bath as soon as possible to remove any ticks that may still be crawling on you.
- Remove attached ticks slowly and gently, using fine-tipped tweezers applied as close to the skin as possible.



Most tick-borne illnesses can be treated effectively when detected early. See your doctor right away if you develop a fever, rash, or flu-like symptoms after being in tick-infested areas.

It's also important to protect your hunting dog from tick bites and tick-borne disease. Ask your veterinarian about tick prevention before you hunt, and check your dog often for ticks. If you have concerns that your dog picked up a disease, see your veterinarian.

Save the tick! We'll identify it!
If you do find a tick, save it! Put the tick and a few blades of grass in a small, hard container. Send it to DOH for identification. It's simple: follow the steps on the submission form found at www.doh.wa.gov/ticks. You'll help us monitor ticks to better understand the risk of tick-borne disease in our state. On our website, you can learn more about Washington's ticks and how to protect yourself.

Fur Handling Equipment

To receive top dollar for their furs, a trapper needs equipment to prepare the fur properly. There are variations on the setup and design of the equipment and you will want to find out what works best for you. Trappers may also want to check with fur dealers to determine how the dealers would like the furs. If they want raw furs that have not been fleshed, then that may cut down on the trappers work. Below is equipment that a trapper will need to completely prepare the furs for sale:

- Beaver boards
- Belly boards
- Comb or brush
- Electric heater or wood stove
- Fleshing beam
- Fleshing knife
- Hand scraper
- Insulated work area
- Knife sharpener
- Metal hoops
- Nails and push pins
- Needle and thread
- Rubber apron and gloves
- Skinning knife
- Skinning table
- Stretching boards
- Tail stripper
- Wire stretchers
- Yard stick

Beaver boards	These boards are generally made from ½ inch plywood and allow the beaver fur to be stretched and tacked to the board to dry.
Belly board	This board slides between the fur and perpendicular to the stretching board in the belly area of the fur to make it easier to remove the fur from the stretching board.
Comb or brush	This is used on the finished furs to make them more presentable and remove sticks, burs, etc.
Electric heater or wood stove	Most trappers try to maintain a temperature between 50 and 65 degrees Fahrenheit in their work area. A fan helps circulate warm air throughout the work area. Most trappers use a small electric heater or wood stove to provide the heat.
Fleshing beam	A rounded beam that is used to hold the skin while fleshing. The skin goes over the beam like a sock and a fleshing knife is used to remove fat and flesh. The beam will generally be leaned at an angle against an immobile saw horse or table.
Fleshing knife	A fleshing knife is used to remove flesh and fat on a skin. If the flesh and fat were left on the skin, the fur may fall out or slip. This is also referred to as a draw knife.
Hand scraper	This is also a tool used for fleshing skins. It is a one handed tool generally.
Insulated work area	A well-insulated, well heated, and well-lit area to work is paramount to processing fur. This can be a shed, garage, or shop as long as it is big enough to allow plenty of room to skin your catch, stretch the fur, and allow warm air to circulate completely around stretched furs. A fan can help circulate air in the work area.
Knife sharpener	The knife sharpener can be a whetstone, steel, or a set of crock sticks but the trapper must be able to effectively use it. Always wipe and wash the blade clean before applying it to a sharpening device.
Metal hoops	Metal hoops allow the beaver skin to be tied to the hoop for drying.
Nails and push pins	These are used to tack the skins to the stretching board or beaver board.
Needle and thread	A needle and thread are used for sewing up holes and cuts in the skin.
Rubber apron and gloves	These are used to protect clothing and hands when handling the skins. They can be disposable or reusable items.
Skinning knives	In general a knife with a deep belly will help keep you from accidentally piercing the fur. A dull knife forces the skinner to apply too much pressure to cut and often results in a cut hand or a hole in the pelt.
Skinning Table	A sturdy table or bench is required for skinning and stretching. The table should be able to hold a large beaver or coyote as well as several tools without bowing. Any material constructed table should be good but plastic tables clean up easier.
Stretching board	The stretching board is used to hold the shape of the fur while it dries. Each type of furbearer requires a stretching board that is sized to that animal.
Tail stripper	This is used to remove the tail bone from furs on which the tail is retained.
Wire stretcher	This is a wire frame stretching board.
Yard stick	This is used to determine the proper stretching size for a skin.

Pelt Preparation

Three things determine the value of a pelt: the current market, the quality of the fur on the particular hide, and the way it has been handled. Since handling is the only factor you can influence, particular attention should be paid to this part. A good trapper takes pride in producing fur that is clean, well-handled, and uniform in appearance. Fur that has been well handled commands the best possible price because it is easy to grade, handle, and resell. There are certain ways that each kind of animal should be handled to result in the best pelt. The animals usually need to be skinned, fleshed, and dried to go to market. Check with prospective buyers on how the fur should be prepared before preparing the furs.

Below is basic information on skinning, fleshing, stretching, and freezing furs. Fur Harvesters Auction Inc. has allowed WDFW to use their pelt handling manual for a really well done "how to" on preparing your pelts for the fur buyer. This manual can be found at http://www.furharvesters.com/publications.html.

Please note that in the Fur Harvester Auction Inc. manual there are several species legal for harvest in other areas that are protected in Washington and cannot be harvested. These species are fisher, lynx, wolf, and wolverine.

Skinning Your Catch

First the outside fur of the animal should be dried and any burrs or lumps of dirt combed out of the fur. Most animals are dried either by hanging them up or placing them on several thicknesses of newspaper and turning periodically. After the animal is dried you will want to start skinning. There are a couple ways fur buyers like to have the skins prepared so make sure to check with them before you start skinning. The first is "cased furs". This style of skinning is just like removing a sock from your foot. The other is "open furs". Open furs are skinned just like a deer or elk. Trappers should wear protective gloves when skinning to protect themselves from parasites and possible disease transmission.

Fleshing the Skin

After skinning, trappers must make sure to remove flesh and fat that is left on the skin after skinning. If left on the skin, flesh and fat will rot and can make the fur slip or fall out and affect the quality of the fur. To easily remove the fat and flesh, trappers should use a fleshing beam and fleshing knife. It might be a good idea for trappers to have multiple fleshing beams for different sized animals.

Stretching the Skin

Once the skin has been fleshed and all flesh and fat removed, the skin needs to be stretched for drying. Stretching is not necessarily the most accurate term because the skins are actually held in place to dry and prevent shrinking or shriveling. Trappers can stretch cased fur skins on wire stretchers or wooden stretchers. Open fur skins should be dried on plywood boards or wire rings. Regardless of how long it takes, the fur should remain on the stretcher until it is completely dry except for coyote, bobcat, fox, and marten. These skins should be dried until almost completely dry to the touch, then turned back to fur side out and dried for several more days on the stretching board or wire stretcher.

Freezing Fur

Many trappers will freeze whole animals, skins, or dried skins to hold them until they can work them up, sell them, or to hold them from one season to the next in hopes that fur prices will increase. There are some problems doing this which should be addressed so that the trapper doesn't end up with a skin that has no value.

Whole animals can be frozen if you have a lot of freezer space. These animals shouldn't stay frozen for longer than two or three months as the nose and ears will start to freezer burn. Freezer burning is a process which actually dries out spots or pieces of skin completely, creating an area that will not tan later.

Skins can be frozen and finished up later. This is okay if you do not flesh the hide before freezing as the fat layer helps prevent freezer burn. They can be held for quite a while using one of two methods.

- Squeeze out all the air, roll them with the fur out, and push them into heavy (3mil) plastic bags before freezing them.
    - Be careful not to stack them so high they cannot freeze quickly.
- Put the pelt in a gallon milk carton, fill the carton with water and freeze.
    - This method keeps the hide from freezer burning for a longer period of time.

The most successful way to keep dried fur until next year is by freezing. However, usually dried skins kept in freezer bags will have a tell-tale yellow color to the fat deposits and buyers will downgrade this fur to stale, making it worth half what fresh skins are worth. The longer a skin is held the less likely it is to tan, making it worth less money.

Marketing of Fur

Most fur is sold for use in the garment industry worldwide. It may be used for coats, trim, or linings. Demand for fur differs from year to year depending upon uses and fashion trends. Europe has been the largest buyer of many types of American fur. In the last few years China and Russia have become increasingly important in the fur market, with strong competition from US and Canadian buyers. China and Russia have lower tanning and manufacturing costs and are producing an increased quality of finished goods. Changing fashions, emphasis on long or short-haired fur, length of coats, etc. also influences the price of fur.

Individual trappers will have to pick a method or combination of methods of selling fur that best suits their particular interests and needs. All methods have some advantages and some disadvantages. Selling fur is little different than playing the stock market. Sometimes you come out ahead and sometimes you don't. New trappers are encouraged to contact other trappers, trapper associations, or trapping publications for possible sources of buyers and for marketing advice before selling. A trapper who is up to date on marketing information and understands at least some of the complexities of grading fur is more likely to sell his catch for what it is worth.

Local Sales

There are several choices when it comes to selling your catch. The first is a local buyer. They often are or have been a local trapper and know the fur in your area fairly well. Local buyers usually will buy whole animals, green (skinned but not fleshed or stretched) skins, or finished hides.

Advantages of selling locally are:

- The local buyer may purchase the entire lot of fur and you receive immediate payment.
- You pay no commissions or shipping costs.
- You can sell whenever you want.
- You get to know the buyer personally and they get to know you.
- The local buyer can give you hints and tips for being successful.

Disadvantages of local selling are:

- You should expect lower prices.
- Some buyers are not good at grading fur or do not know what price they will receive when they resell your fur. Fur prices often fluctuate in a season, making firm prices impossible to maintain.

Selling by Mail

Many trappers sell by mail. Licensed trappers will get a number of price lists and shipping tags from fur houses. Trapping periodicals carry many ads of fur buyers who claim they will pay the highest possible prices with honest grading.

The advantages of selling by mail are:

- You can sell whenever you want without driving long distances.
- The fur buyer will usually buy your whole catch and you will get payment in a few days.
- There are no commissions taken out and some buyers will pay postage.
- Most mail buyers will "hold separate" for 10 days or so and will return your furs to you if you are not satisfied with the price. You should always check to make sure they will do this if you have not dealt with the buyer regularly.

Disadvantages of selling by mail are:

- Price lists can be very deceiving, with some buyers quoting higher prices than what they will really pay.
- Buyers may raise the price for one or two furs, but then downgrade the rest of your catch to lower the real price they are paying you.
- Any time you are dealing with one buyer, you have the disadvantage of not having competitive bidding to determine what the market value of your catch is at the time you sell.

Auction Sales

Auction selling is available in Washington to those trappers who want to have their furs priced by several buyers at the same time. You can put a minimum price on your fur and not sell if the bids do not reach that price. Auction houses will generally charge a commission. Commissions are charged on fur withdrawn from the sale without being sold. Also, it often takes all day to get the fur sold. Several possibilities for auctions exist. The Oregon Territorial Council, Fur Harvesters, and North American Fur Auctions take place several times a year.

Advantages of auction sales are:

- They usually offer four to five auctions a year.
- These are large auctions with wide attendance.
- Often there will be more than 100 buyers at a sale.
- Your fur, unless in large lots, is sorted with other fur of the same species and quality into lots and a buyer can buy exactly what they need for a particular order.
- Your fur will bring the market price due to the heavy competitive bidding.
- Grading is done by an experienced staff to assure that fur is placed in the right lots.
- Auctioneers get more for your fur because higher prices increase their commissions.

Disadvantages of auction sales are:

- The fur sales are held one to three months apart so you may have to wait to sell.
- Fur that does not meet the minimum price is held over until the next sale
- Large auction houses charge around 11 percent commission on sales.

- Market conditions can change between the time you catch your fur and the time it actually sells.
- Furs sold at auctions sometimes bring prices that are 10 - 50 percent more or less within a month when the markets are not stable.

Furbearer Recipes

Furbearers historically were harvested for their meat and fur. In modern times, it is not as common to eat furbearers but some are actually quite tasty when prepared properly. To help make the most of the animals you harvest, the Washington State Trappers Association has provided the following recipes as a starting point. If you choose not to use the meat from furbearers that you trap, they can be used as bait for other furbearers or the carcass should be disposed of properly. After skinning the animal, you can field dress it and use the entire carcass. However, most of the meat is on the animal's hind and front quarters, and you could remove those from the carcass and not touch the internal organs.

Roast Raccoon:

1 medium size raccoon
2 pods red pepper
1 tablespoon salt or to taste
1/2 cup flour
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 small onion if desired

Place the meat in a pot and cover it with water. Put in the two pods of red pepper and salt and partially cook the meat by boiling until the meat is tender. Remove from the pot and put the meat in a roasting pan, sprinkle on the flour and pepper. Add the onion if desired and cook until brown at 375 F.

Roast Bobcat:

Bobcat quarters
Salt
Pepper
Sage
Water
(Optional ingredients: Bacon, Onion, Garlic)

Create a salt water bath for the meat in a bowl or dish. Soak the quarters overnight. When ready, boil the quarter(s) briskly for ten minutes. Remove them from the pot and with a knife, remove all the fat that you can. Put the meat in a roasting pan and season with salt, pepper, and add a sprinkling of sage. You can also add a strip or two of bacon, a medium size onion, or a couple of garlic cloves to the meat before cooking. Roast the meat in a 375 degree F oven until well done.

Fried muskrat or beaver:

Muskrat or beaver (use young beaver if possible) meat
Flour
Salt
Pepper

Remove all fat and wash the meat. Cut the meat into bite sized pieces and set aside. In a bowl, combine flour, salt, pepper, and a little water. Stir until the batter together. It should look like a pancake batter. Dip the pieces of meat in the batter and fry it in oil.

Roast Muskrat:

2-4 muskrats
Salt
Water

Remove most of the fat on the muskrats. Clean and wash them. Season the meat with salt. Place the muskrats in a roasting pan with a little water in the bottom of the pan. Bake in the oven at 350° F for about an hour or until the meat is falling off the bones.

Beaver Liver:

1 beaver liver
Flour
Salt

Wash the liver well and cut it into strips. Lightly roll the strips in flour. Fry the liver quickly with plenty of oil or butter. Sliced onions may also be fried with the liver and will add more flavor to the liver.

Barbecued Muskrat:

2-4 muskrats
1 cup hot catsup
1 cup Worcestershire sauce
1 cup cider vinegar

Remove the fat of the muskrat and rinse clean and set aside. Combine the hot catsup, Worcestershire sauce and cider vinegar in a bowl. Marinate the muskrats for 24 hours in the liquid. Cook over a charcoal fire and paint the meat with the marinade periodically.

Fried Raccoon:

One young raccoon
Milk, enough to cover the pieces
Flour
Salt and Pepper

Remove all the fat from the raccoon. Cut the meat into small pieces for frying. Soak the meat for 30-40 minutes in milk. Remove the meat from the milk and roll it in flour. Season the meat with salt and pepper. Drop the pieces into hot oil. Fry until golden brown.

Raccoon stew:

1 pound raccoon meat with fat removed
Water, to cover
Vegetable medley (Chef's choice of veggies)
Water and cornstarch mixture (Thickening agent)

Cut meat in small pieces. Cover the meat with water and boil until it is tender. Add the vegetables. Skim off any fat that comes to the top of the stew. Thicken stew with a mixture of cold water and corn starch if desired.

Beaver Stew:

2 hindquarters of a small to medium beaver (about 5 lbs)
5 large potatoes, peeled and cubed
1 medium onion
7 or 8 carrots, sliced
1 green pepper
6 stalks celery, chopped
Between 1 teaspoon and 1 ½ tablespoons of salt depending on tastes
A pinch of cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon sage
Corn starch

Remove the fat from the quarters. Put the pieces of beaver in a large pot and bring the water to a boil. Simmer until the meat is tender, around two hours. Remove the meat from pot and set aside. Add the carrots to the stew and cook for 3 minutes. Then add the remainder of the vegetables. Next add the spices and simmer the vegetables until tender. Add the cooked meat back into the pot. Combine cornstarch and water in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Add the cornstarch mixture to the stew to thicken.

Roast Beaver:

Hind quarter of a beaver(s)
Salt
Pepper
Sage
Water
(Optional ingredients: Orange juice, Bacon, Onion, Garlic)

Create a salt water bath for the meat in a bowl or dish. Soak the quarters overnight. When ready, boil the quarter(s) briskly for ten minutes. Remove them from the pot and with a knife, remove all the fat that you can. Put the meat in a roasting pan and season with salt, pepper, and add a sprinkling of sage. You can also add a strip or two of bacon, a medium size onion, or a couple of garlic cloves to the meat before cooking. Roast the meat in a 375° F oven until well done. Basting with orange juice enhances the flavor.

Bobcat Stew:

2 pounds bobcat meat
4 tablespoons oil
1 small onion, chopped
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper

½ teaspoon summer savory
¼ teaspoon Oregano
4 potatoes quartered
4 carrots, diced
½ cup celery, chopped
½ cup cold water
Cornstarch
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

Remove any fat on the meat. Wash well, pat dry, and cut the meat into 2 inch cubes. Add the oil to a heavy pot on medium heat and add meat. Cook until browned. Add the onions, salt, pepper, savory, and oregano. Cover the meat with cold water. Bring the stew to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 1 ½ hours. Add the potatoes, carrots, and celery and continue simmering for ½ hour or until the meat and vegetables are tender. Combine cornstarch and water in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Add the cornstarch mixture to the stew to thicken. Just before serving, add the Worcestershire sauce.

Washington State Trappers Association

The Washington State Trappers Association (WSTA) has been a long time partner with the department when it comes to trapper education. The WSTA teaches almost all of the trapper education courses throughout the state. These dedicated volunteer instructors worked with WDFW staff on the updating of this manual.

One of the most popular events of the WSTA is the Annual Rendezvous, currently held in mid-August over a three day period. The first Rendezvous was held in 1969, two years after the association was formed. Events at the rendezvous include trapping presentations by some of the most knowledgeable professional trappers in the state. In addition, there are vendors with fur and trapping supplies, two or three raffles, an auction, and a contest for the children and the rest of the family, a membership meeting, and awards are given to the winners of the contest plus, awards for members, good food and a whole lot of camaraderie. Along with the additional events and activities, WSTA puts on the trapper education Classes which are required if you wish to buy a trapping license.

For more information on the WSTA please see their website at http://www.watrappers.com/index.html.

Wildlife Control Operator Program

The Wildlife Control Operator (WCO) program certifies professional trappers to remove nuisance wildlife for a fee. It is unlawful to trap nuisance wildlife on the property of another for a fee or other consideration without certification as a WCO. If you are interested in becoming a WCO please visit the WCO webpage online at, https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/nuisance-wildlife/wildlife-control-operators/faq.

Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
Bacteria	Common one-celled micro-organisms
Body gripping trap	A trap which catches and holds an animal by the body
Cage trap	A trap designed to enclose an animal and usually to hold it alive
Carcass	The part of an animal which remains after the pelt has been removed by skinning
Carnivore	An animal that primarily eats other animals
Carrion	Dead animals available as food for other animals
Carrying capacity	A term referring to the number of animals that a given area of habitat can support
Cased pelt	A pelt that has been skinned by cutting across the hind legs and pulling it down over the body
Coniferous	Types of trees that have needles and cones; coniferous trees usually stay green all year
Colony Trap	A two door submersion trap. The doors are not mechanically closed but close by gravity. This trap allows multiple animals to enter the trap.
Cubby	A small enclosure, either natural or man-made, that prevents an animal from getting to the trap bait except from one direction
Droppings	Feces of an animal
Ermine	The white color phase of the weasel
Ethics	A personal code of behavior
Fleshing	The act of removing excess fat and meat from a pelt
Fleshing beam	A large wooden or fiberglass form designed to hold and support the pelt while fleshing
Frostbite	A serious health hazard involving the freezing of the skin or other body tissues
Fur stretcher	A frame for allowing the fur to dry in a standard shape; does not actually stretch‖ the pelt
Green pelt	A pelt which has not been stretched and dried
Guard hairs	The long, glossy hairs that overlay and protect the softer, denser underfur
Habitat	The place where an animal lives; principal components are food, water, and shelter
Home range	The area over which an animal travels in its day- to-day activities
Hypothermia	A serious health risk involving loss of body heat resulting in loss of coordination and possibly death
Leghold trap	Unlawful for use in Washington State without a special permit issued by WDFW; a trap which catches and holds an animal by foot to either hold it alive or drown it
Lure	A substance or device used to attract an animal to a trap
Non-target animal	Species for which a trap was not intended (e.g., protected wildlife, rabbits, etc.)
Open pelt	A pelt skinned by cutting down the midline of the belly
Parasite	A plant or animal that lives on or in another species without benefiting the host
Pelage	The hair or fur of an animal plus the skin
Prime pelt	Normally refers to a pelt in which the winter fur is completely grown in and the hair follicles completely mature
Rabies	A serious viral disease of warm-blooded animals transmitted primarily in the saliva of infected animals
Raw fur	A pelt that has not been salted or tanned (may be stretched and dried)

Renewable resource	A naturally reproducing resource that generates a surplus which can be harvested
Sarcoptic mange	An infection caused by mites which burrow under the skin
Tanning	The process of preserving a hide by treating it to make leather
Swim Through trap	Is a double door submersion trap that allows the animal to see through the trap but once it enters the doors spring closed like a cage trap.
Territory	The portion of an animal's home range that is defended against trespass by other animals of the same species
Trap bed	The hole dug in the ground in which traps are placed
Trap hook	A pole with a hook at one end to help find and recover traps from the water; also used as a wading staff
Tularemia	A bacterial disease of rabbits and rodents that can be transmitted to humans through cuts or scratches while skinning infected animals
Underfur	The soft, dense fibers underlying the guard hairs that provide the primary insulation for the animal

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FURBEARER TRAPPING REGULATIONS

Effective from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, both dates inclusive

TRAPPER EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

People buying a Washington State Trapping License for the first time must pass an exam in safe, humane, and proper trapping techniques. For information on trapper education see wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/education or contact the Hunter Education section of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) office in Olympia at (360) 902-8111.

ANNUAL TRAPPING LICENSE

A trapping license year begins on April 1 and ends on March 31 of the next year. Fees below include transaction and dealer fees.

Resident Trapping License $41.60
Resident Youth Trapping License $18.50
Non-Resident Trapping License $200.00

Fur Dealer's License $200.00

Trapping and fur dealer's licenses are available online at fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov and at all WDFW license dealers. Trapping and fur dealer's licenses may also be purchased through the Commercial Licensing program at the WDFW Olympia headquarters office (in person or by mail) for an additional application fee.

STATEWIDE TRAPPING SEASONS

A trapping license authorizes the lethal harvest of furbearing animals for their hides, pelts, or other resources during the trapping season. Furbearers may not be taken from the wild and held alive for sale or personal use without a special permit pursuant to WAC 220-450-030. Any wildlife trapped for which the season is not open shall be released unharmed. Any wildlife that cannot be released unharmed must be left in the trap, and a WDFW representative must be notified immediately. Lawfully trapped wild animals must be lethally dispatched or immediately released. A firearm may be used to dispatch trapped animals where firearm use is allowed. For more information on lethal dispatch, see wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/nuisance-wildlife/trapping and the Trapper Education manual at wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/education/trapping.

FURBEARER SPECIES	SEASON DATES
Badger, Beaver, Bobcat, Marten, Mink, Muskrat, Raccoon, Red Fox, River Otter and Weasel	Nov. 1 - Mar. 31 during the current license year

TRAP CHECK REQUIREMENTS—

- Animals captured in restraining traps (any non-killing set) must be removed within 24 hours of capture.
- Kill traps must be checked and animals removed within 72 hours.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Director
Kelly Susewind

Wildlife Program
Eric Gardner, Wildlife Program Director

Olympia Office: (360) 902-2515

Visitors– Natural Resources Building
1111 Washington St. SE
Olympia, WA

Mailing Address– PO Box 43141
Olympia, WA 98504-3141

Regional Offices:

Region 1
(509) 892-1001
2315 North Discovery Place
Spokane Valley, WA 99216-1566

Region 2
(509) 754-4624
1550 Alder Street NW
Ephrata, WA 98823-9699

Region 3
(509) 575-2740
1701 S 24th Ave.
Yakima, WA 98902-5720

Region 4
(425) 775-1311
16018 Mill Creek Blvd.
Mill Creek, WA 98012-1541

Region 5
(360) 696-6211
5525 S 11th Street
Ridgefield, WA 98642

Region 6
(360) 249-4628
48 Devonshire Road
Montesano, WA 98563

Fish and Wildlife Commission
(360) 902-2267
wdfw.wa.gov/about/commission

Website
wdfw.wa.gov

IT IS UNLAWFUL TO TRAP FOR WILD ANIMALS:

- With body-gripping traps EXCEPT by permit to abate an animal problem under WAC 220-417-040. These include, but are not limited to, padded foot-hold traps, unpadded foot-hold traps, all snares, and conibear-type traps.
- Using game birds, game fish, or game animals for bait, except nonedible parts of game birds, game fish, or game animals may be used as bait.
- Within thirty feet of any exposed meat bait or nonedible game parts which are visible to flying raptors.

IDENTIFICATION OF TRAPS AND DISCLOSURE OF IDENTITIES

Trappers shall attach to the chain of their traps or devices a legible metal tag with either their WDFW identification number (trapper ID or Wild ID) or the name and address of the trapper in English letters not less than one-eighth inch in height. Failure to identify traps is an infraction punishable under RCW 77.15.190. When a property owner, lessee, or tenant presents a trapper identification number to WDFW and requests the identification of the trapper, WDFW shall provide the requestor with the name and address of the trapper. After disclosing the trapper's name, WDFW will also release the requesting individual's name and address to the trapper. It is unlawful to take a wild animal from another person's trap without permission, or to spring, pull up, damage, possess or destroy the trap; however, it is not unlawful for a person to remove a trap placed on property owned, leased, or rented by the person. See RCW 77.32.545.

PERMISSION TO TRAP ON PRIVATE LAND

A state trapping license allows the holder to trap furbearing animals throughout the state; however, a trapper may not place traps on private property without permission of the owner, lessee, or tenant where the land is improved and apparently used, or where the land is fenced or enclosed in a manner designed to exclude intruders or to indicate a property boundary line, or where notice is given by posting in a conspicuous manner.

CLOSED AREAS

Most public lands are open to trapping, but some areas may be closed. Closed areas include, but are not limited to, state and national parks, most federal wildlife refuges, and state game reserves. Trappers should check with land managers prior to trapping. Legal descriptions of state game reserves are found in the game bird hunting regulations at wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations and Chapter 220-411 of the Washington Administrative Code.

TRAPPER REPORT OF CATCH

All licensed trappers must report their trapping activity (regardless of success or whether they trapped or not) by April 20. Annual reports must be made using the department's Trapping Activity Report Form, found online at wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/harvest-reporting. It is the responsibility of the licensed trapper to ensure the form is received (emailed or postmarked by April 20) by WDFW. Any trapper not reporting by April 20 will be in noncompliance of reporting requirements. False reports will be considered the same as noncompliance. Failure to report trapping activity is an infraction, punishable under RCW 77.15.160.

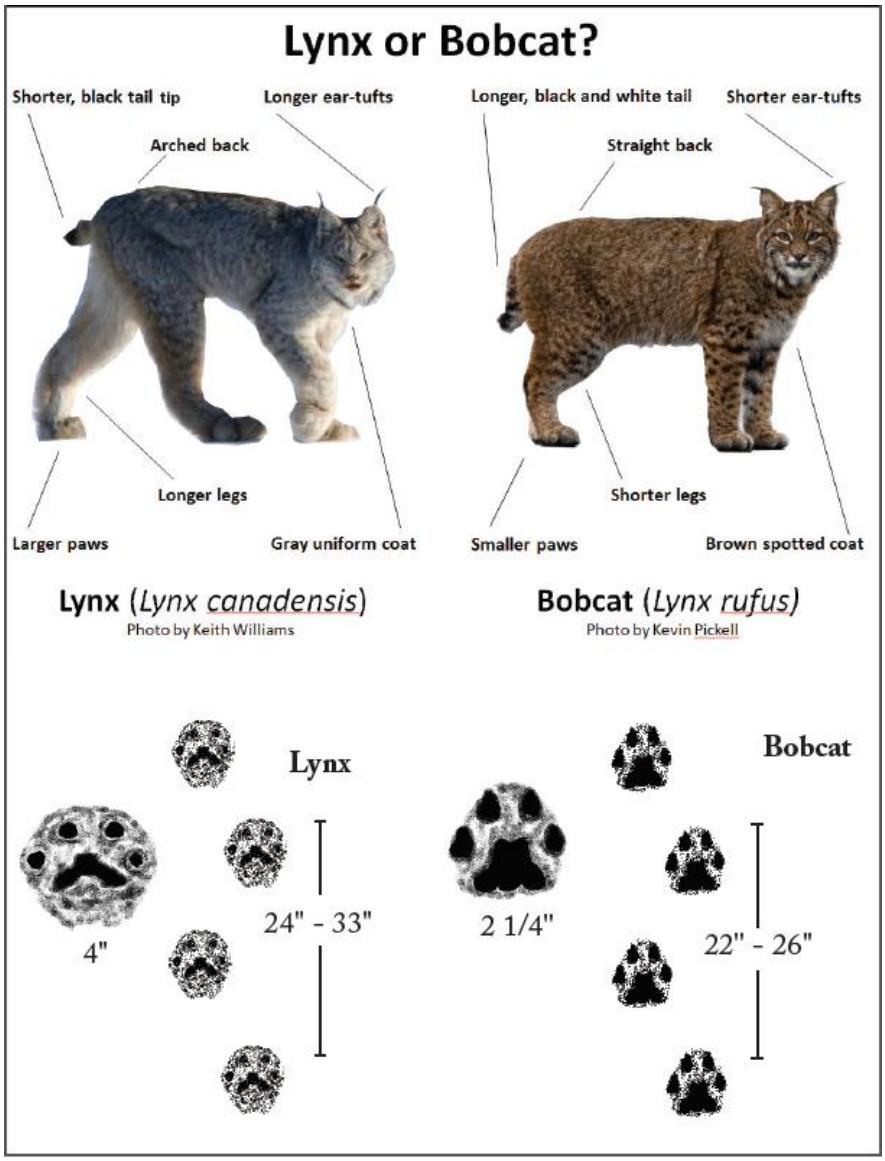
SEALING REQUIREMENTS FOR BOBCAT AND RIVER OTTER

It is unlawful to possess or export from the state of Washington bobcat or river otter pelts taken in Washington without a department identification seal attached. All bobcat and river otter pelts, on or off the carcass, must be presented by the person harvesting them to an authorized department employee or authorized individual under permit with the department for sealing by April 20. Pelts must be presented in a way that the hide can be sealed. No frozen hides or carcasses will be accepted. To make sure office personnel are available for pelt sealing, trappers should contact a department office prior to bringing in a bobcat or river otter.

INCIDENTAL TAKE OF CANADA LYNX

Canada lynx are protected in Washington. Accidentally trapped Canada lynx that are uninjured must be released immediately and the incident must be reported to WDFW (WildThing@dfw.wa.gov or 360-902-2515) within 24 hours. The report must include the circumstances surrounding the incident, observed physical and ambulatory condition of the lynx, and final disposition of the lynx. Any Canada lynx that cannot be released unharmed must be left in the trap, and a WDFW representative must be notified immediately.

This pamphlet is a summary of the trapping seasons and regulations (Chapters 220-400, 220-417, 220-440 and 220-450 of the Washington Administrative Code) adopted by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. This pamphlet does not contain nor is it intended to contain all department regulations. Caution: Emergency regulation changes may occur while seasons described in this pamphlet are in effect and will supersede information contained herein. Area news media will be informed of changes as they occur.



Identification of Fisher and Marten in Washington

Pelage Colors

Fisher – dark brown with lighter shading on head, back of the neck and back.

Marten – light brown to brown (cinnamon, russet), with creamy brown/ beige face and occasionally chest with darker brown legs, feet and end of tail.

Fishers are protected under both federal and state law and may not be trapped or killed. Be sure of identification if you are trapping marten or mink.

FISHER

Photo by Paul Bannick

MARTEN

WDFW Staff

Ear Shape

Fishers – rounded "teddy-bear" shaped ears

Marten – more pointed ears

Size

Fishers are bigger, darker and have noticeably longer and fuller tails than marten. Fishers tails average 14-15 inches in length and Marten tails average 6.5-7.5 inches in length.

Trapping Information

Use cubby boxes, with a closed front and 2.5 inch entrance hole, to avoid catching fishers.

Elevation

Fishers and marten overlap in elevation. Therefore, elevation should not be used as an indicator of species presence.

Annual report form can be found at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/trapping/

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For more information about the Trapper Education Program, contact our staff in Olympia at (360) 902-8410.

Website

https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/education

Email

huntered@dfw.wa.gov

Regional Offices

Region 1 Spokane Office:	(509) 892-1001
Region 2 Ephrata Office:	(509) 754-4624
Region 3 Yakima Office:	(509) 575-2740
Region 4 Mill Creek Office:	(425) 775-1311
Region 5 Vancouver Office:	(360) 696-6211
Region 6 Montesano Office:	(360) 239-4628
Headquarters Olympia Office:	(360) 902-8111

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

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The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) receives federal assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and provides equal access to its programs, services, activities, and facilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968.

The U.S. Department of the Interior and WDFW prohibit discrimination on the bases of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, mental or physical disability, reprisal, sexual orientation, status as a parent, and genetic information. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please contact the WDFW ADA Program Manager, PO Box 43139, Olympia, WA 98504 within 45 calendar days of the alleged incident before filing a formal complaint, or write to: Chief, Public Civil Rights Division, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington DC 20240.

If you need further assistance or information, please contact the Olympia office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: (360) 902-2349, or Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), (360) 902-2207.