

Practices to Help Reduce Incidentally Trapping Fishers

The Columbian population of fishers in BC's Central Interior is endangered and at risk of being lost. This population primarily faces threats from forest harvesting and habitat loss and degradation. Trapping also has an impact, and although fisher trapping seasons have been closed across the Thompson, Cariboo, Omineca, and southern portion of the Skeena region, fishers may still be incidentally killed in traps set for other species.

Trappers operating within Columbian fisher habitat can take measures to help reduce the bycatch of fishers by employing the following:

Trap-setting approaches:

1. When marten trapping with a 120-sized killing trap, use a Fisher Exclusion Box.

An exclusion box is an elongated marten cubby fitted with a faceplate that is sized to prevent fishers from getting in while still allowing access for martens. Exclusion boxes must include a 2¼ inch faceplate entry hole diameter, a 10 inch side slot length, and a 17 inch box length. More information on exclusion boxes can be found at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/recreation/fishing-hunting/hunting/trapping-in-bc>.

2. When using larger-sized kill traps for species like bobcat and lynx (e.g., 220, 280, and 330-sized traps), use scent lures such as catnip, instead of bait that is derived from animals.
3. When using foot-hold sets for coyotes and wolves, the pan tension should be set at 12 pounds or greater.
4. When possible, neck snares should be set high enough off the ground/snow to provide opportunity for fishers to travel under the bottom of the snare loop (e.g., 14 - 18 inches for wolves).

General trapping principles:

1. Where fisher sign is present, avoid the use of kill-traps, or cease trapping activities altogether, within 4 km of sign or a sighting.
2. Where possible, trap in less suitable fisher habitats:
 - trap in more open areas lacking forest cover or in young, regenerating forests.
 - trap at elevations in subalpine habitats of more than 1200 m.
 - avoid trapping near large cottonwoods and fir snags that may be fisher den sites.

Fisher Habitat: important fisher denning and resting habitat includes forested habitats with coarse woody debris and large diameter aspen, cottonwood, and spruce trees. Snags and trees with signs of decay or disease also serve as important rest sites (e.g., cavity, rust, broom, fire scar).

To learn more about fisher and fisher habitat visit: www.bcfisherhabitat.ca/fisher-ecology/

If you do incidentally trap a fisher, it is important that it is reported to the Province - **do not throw the animal away**. Under the *Wildlife Act*, a person must promptly report to an officer when they accidentally kill or wound wildlife. In addition, trappers must submit for compulsory inspection the carcass and pelt of all fishers trapped outside of an open season within 30 days of the kill date.

Trapper compliance in submitting these carcasses supports fisher management, conservation, and provides an opportunity to understand and monitor fisher reproduction and health. Carcasses submitted for compulsory inspection are necropsied and studied by biologists, and pelts and carcasses may be submitted into museum collections and archives.