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- Kirk Johnson

http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Martes_pennanti.html

Warren Times Observer, Friday, February 24, 2006
A fisher in your future?
By DEAN WELLS, Staff Writer

Wildlife biologists are planning to travel to the Allegheny National Forest later to capture fishers: a large cat-like member of the weasel family that was reintroduced to Pennsylvania 12 years ago.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission and Indiana University of Pennsylvania plan to trap fishers in the ANF and Cambria County this year and next, and in the Laurel Highlands in 2007 and 2008. Trapped fishers will be outfitted with radio collars in an effort to estimate the size of the fisher population in the state.

"It's growing very rapidly in some areas of the state," said Matthew Lovallo, Pennsylvania Game Commission wildlife biologist. "All the signs we're seeing is telling us it is (growing)."

In the past, the Game Commission has based its estimate of the fisher population in the state on reported sightings, accidental capture by trappers and road kills.

According to Lovallo, fishers shouldn't be difficult for the biologists to catch.

"We'll use cage traps," he said. "They're not shy."

Tracing the fishers' movements by radio collars will give biologists a better understanding of the animals' home ranges and habitat.

Fishers were common in Pennsylvania in the pre-European years, but were pushed out when massive timber cuts destroyed most of their habitat.

In 1994, the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, working with the Game Commission and several other organizations and universities, began reintroducing fishers in Pennsylvania. The program moved 190 fishers from New England and New York to northern Pennsylvania.

In addition, Lovallo said fishers are expanding on their own into Pennsylvania from West Virginia and Maryland.

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