
A MULTISPECIES MONITORING APPROACH FOR MESOCARNIVORES IN THE US NORTHERN ROCKIES

Jessie D. Golding*, USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station, Missoula, MT
Michael K. Schwartz, USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station, Missoula, MT
Kevin McKelvey, USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station, Missoula, MT
Cara Staab, USFS Northern Region, Missoula, Montana
Scott Jackson, USFS Northern Region, Missoula, Montana
Rema Sadak, USFS Intermountain Region, Ogden, Utah

Mesocarnivores are ecologically important species that are wide-ranging and often difficult to detect. Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*), lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), and wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) (hereafter mesocarnivores) are three mesocarnivores of conservation or management concern native to the US northern Rocky Mountain region (NRM). Federal and state managing agencies in NRM have multiple directives that guide management of these species and their habitats. Fulfilling these mandates is complicated by two overarching problems: 1) gaps in knowledge about the basic distribution, habitat requirements, and spatial and population trends of these mesocarnivores in the region; and 2) the lack of an appropriate, multi-scale framework to analyze the short-term and long-term trends of these species. In response, the USFS is developing a comprehensive mesocarnivore monitoring strategy to meet our mandates for the NRM. These ideas will ultimately be merged with those of our partners. We present the initial phase of this monitoring strategy, a sequential hierarchy that links the following questions to geographic locations: 1) is the species present? 2) are multiple individuals and females present? 3) how many are present? These questions were developed based on a series of structured interviews, as well as past local and regional survey and monitoring efforts for these mesocarnivores. Repeated investigations of these questions over time will allow understanding of changes in distribution and populations of these mesocarnivores in the NRM..