

How You Can Help

We need volunteers to carry small GPS units that will provide a record of their winter movements. Beginning in January, a team of researchers will be live-trapping wolverines and fitting them with GPS collars while project representatives stationed at parking lots and trail heads in the McCall area will be asking skiers, snowshoers, and snowmobilers to carry small GPS units that will record their movements throughout the day. Participants will be asked to carry the GPS and turn it in at the end of the day; they will not be asked to provide any information about themselves or their activities. We hope to gather a large enough sample of tracks to help us evaluate the relationship between wolverine and human winter activity.

To learn about other aspects of the Rocky Mountain Research Station Wolverine Program, visit our Web site at: <http://www.forestcarnivores.org>.

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Q & A

Who is doing the research?

Members of the USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station in Missoula, MT, are conducting the research. Partner organizations are: Idaho State Snowmobile Association; Idaho Fish and Game; Payette, Boise, and Sawtooth National Forests; University of Montana; and Round River Conservation Studies, the Central Idaho Recreation Coalition.

Are you trying to eliminate winter recreation?

No! The research is intended to help us understand how we can maintain both winter recreation and wolverines. We chose to conduct our research in the McCall area in order to learn from this co-existence.

How can I help?

We need recreationists to carry small GPS units, and we need volunteers to help hand out and collect these units. Please contact us at idahowolverine@gmail.com if you are interested in volunteering. And please tell your friends about this research!

Winter Recreation and the Wolverine



Photo by Chris Peterson.

The wolverine is a mid-sized carnivore with a legendary reputation for being a fearless predator and crafty thief of traplines. Like a ghost, it is rare, shy, and elusive. The wolverine's rugged and remote home range is naturally separated from the places people prefer to live. But these remote areas are no longer truly remote in the winter, and some people are concerned about potential effects of human presence on wolverines.

We are conducting research to clarify our understanding of this relationship, and you can help.



Wolverine and Winter Recreation Study

Wolverine ecology. Living in small family groups of 6 to 10 individuals scattered across 500 square miles, wolverines are active through the winter and rely on their acute sense of smell to find the scattered carcasses of big game animals. Female wolverines move to reproductive dens in late February. Dens are located at high-elevation under deep snow that insulates the offspring (kits) from the cold and hides them from predators. To create the den, the female digs through as much as 15 feet of snow to reach natural cavities under boulders or downed trees. There she has 2 or 3 kits that remain in the den for 9 to 10 weeks. During this period, female wolverines may be sensitive to human presence and direct disturbance, which may result in den abandonment or displacement from important habitat. However, how a wolverine population responds to human presence is not well understood.

Research effort. Our study focuses on documenting wolverine responses to human activity during the winter and denning periods. We will place small GPS collars on wolverines to track their movements, habitat use, and behaviors. And by asking recreationists to carry small GPS units, we will be able to “match” the recreation use—timing and place—to wolverine activities. This study area was chosen because past surveys have shown that both recreation (for example, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing) and wolverines occur throughout. Our aim is to figure out if recreation is influencing wolverine reproduction and habitat use. This way managers and recreationists can work together to ensure the future of both wolverine presence and recreational opportunities.

**We need your help with
this important research!**

**Technology
allows us to
access more
remote country**

We don't fully understand how wolverines respond to humans during the winter and during the late winter denning period. Researchers and you can work together to ensure both winter recreation and wolverines are secure into the future. **We are asking you to carry a small GPS unit while recreating in the McCall area.** Information collected from all participating recreationists will be matched to GPS collars worn by wolverines in the area. This information will allow us to understand if and how wolverines respond to human presence.

Your help is critical.