


# AN UNUSUAL, FOR NOW, WILDLIFE SIGHTING

Posted on: February 17, 2016 | Bob Frye | 0 Comments

 Blog--Fisher 2 (<http://blog.triblive.com/wild-outdoors/wp-content/uploads/sites/37/2016/02/Blog-Fisher-2.jpg>) *This is a photo of the fisher caught on camera in Murrysville.*

It's a rare treat, to be sure. But maybe one that's not as surprising as it might seem.

Bill Powers recently captured a photo of a fisher on his trail camera in the Westmoreland Conservancy King Reserve in Murrysville. The property borders the Crowfoot Sportsmen's Club.

Fishers are the second-largest members of the weasel family in Pennsylvania, smaller only than otters. Long in the body, with short legs and dark, almost blackish-brown fur that gets lighter closer to the shoulders, they feed on small mammals, reptiles, fruit and, most notably, porcupines.

Once common across Pennsylvania, they disappeared when massive timbering destroyed their habitat. They began a comeback a few decades ago when animals were brought in from other states and released here. Some have also expanded into Pennsylvania as a result of a similar restoration program begun just over the border in West Virginia.

Still, catching site of one is unusual.

Powers was doing some survey work on the site of a proposed land swap with the club when he noticed an active red-tail hawk nest. He went back a day later to check it out.

"In the process of going to the nest I found a dead raccoon in the stream, which gave me an opportunity to set up a camera to get some red-tail photos. Over the past month the camera has captured some great red-tail and red fox photos," he said.

Over Valentine's Day weekend, though, it got some of a fisher, too.

"Pretty cool stuff, huh?" he said.

Indeed. There must be others around, though. Pennsylvania Game Commissioner Bob Schlemmer lives in Export. He said he's seen fishers roaming around nearby – within a half mile of his home — multiple times in the last couple of years.

That might soon be more common.

Matt Lovallo, game mammals section supervisor for the commission, said fisher populations are growing at a "predictable and steady rate," based on several indices. The southwest and northwest regions of the state are behind much of that, according to wildlife conservation officer sightings and incidental catches by trappers.

It's this region of the state that's providing much of the fisher harvest, too.

Trappers took 401 fishers in 2015, according to a preliminary count. That's the second highest harvest – behind only 2014's 443 – since the season opened on them in 2010, according to commission figures.

Wildlife management unit 1B, around Erie County, gave up the most fishers, with 78. Unit 2D, surrounding Armstrong County, ranked second with a harvest of 58, while unit 2F around Forest County was third with 46 and unit 2C around Somerset was fourth with 43.

Trappers will likely have more opportunity to take a fisher this year.

The season limit will remain at one per trapper. But the season will – if a change given preliminary approval is formally adopted in April – double in length.

In 2015, it ran for six days, from Dec. 19-24. In 2016, commissioners are proposing to run it 12 days, from Dec. 17-28.

Lovallo said he doesn't necessarily expect the harvest to climb dramatically. But the timing of it may change, as more people attempt to trap before Christmas.

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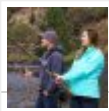
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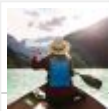


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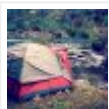


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The image shows a Facebook post from the page 'Everybody Adventures', which has 2,220 likes. The post features a photograph of a crocodile resting on a laptop keyboard. The laptop screen displays a green, swampy landscape. The post is set against a background of a forest scene. Below the photo, the post is attributed to 'Everybody Adventures' and is dated 'about an hour ago'. Above the photo, there are buttons for 'Like Page' and 'Shop Now', and a notification that '1 friend likes this' with a small profile picture.

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No


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Bob Frye is a storyteller with a passion for all things outdoors. He hunts, he fishes, he hikes, he camps, he paddles, backpacks and snowshoes depending on the season. If he's not an expert at anything, it's because he's passionate to try a little bit of everything.

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