

# Wolverines: Ferocious Weasels



I didn't know that wolverines live in the Cascades! Did you?

Wolverines, which are the largest members of the weasel family, live in the Pacific Northwest. They range from Canada down through the Cascade mountains, including around Mt. Rainier.

Wolverines look like small bears, but they are classified in the weasel family. They have also been compared to skunks, because wolverines are known for their bad smell! Sometimes they are called “skunk bears”. Males are between 26-44 pounds, and females weigh between 18-27 pounds. With their dark brown fur and big, webbed feet, they can stay warm as they walk through deep, mountain snow. Their bodies are stout, and they have small, brown eyes. Also, their dark fur is marked by a patch of lighter brown fur along their sides to their tails.

Like cougars, wolverines are carnivores. They are not picky eaters and will prey upon any smaller mammals they can find. Especially in the winter, wolverines will try to kill a larger animal, such as a deer. If they do, the meat will last a long time in the freezing weather. Because they are small mammals themselves, other carnivores prey on them – such as cougars, gray wolves, and humans! Wolverine fur has been hunted for their fur, which was used to line the hoods of parkas. They have long, sharp claws and sharp teeth. Wolverine are ferocious.

Snow and cold temperatures are important characteristics of wolverine's habitat. When there is not enough snowfall and winters are warmer than normal, wolverines may have to leave an area and find a new place to live. Typically, they have a large range, sometimes up to 770 square miles!

Male wolverines mark their territory with scent. They allow several females to live near them, though. Females make themselves a den in deep snow and have their babies inside. Their babies are called “kits” and can stay with their mothers for two years.