

Saw a long black animal low to the ground in the green field. Seemed large for a black squirrel. Is there anything else it could have been? It ran back to the stream as I approached.

It was large for a black squirrel because it wasn't one.

We first saw the mystery animal about 4 weeks ago (in late October or early November) and saw it several evenings in a row just shortly after the sun set or in the dark as we were leaving for home at night.

I was not the first person on staff to see it and based on the description I immediately thought back to my days at school in central Maine – it must be a Fisher (*Martes pennanti*). Fishers are fairly common in Maine and look like long, dark, low-slung animals. We checked a couple of books and discovered that we are very far south in their range; although, they can be found in California (maybe as far south as the Point Reyes area). We had a mystery critter on our hands.

For a week or so it was only seen in the dark or near dark and we couldn't figure what exactly it was. We stuck to our guns and hoped for an out of place, wandering Fisher or maybe a Martin (*Martes americana*), a close cousin to the Fisher.

Then, one afternoon, it was out in the middle of the field, lying quietly, within easy range of binoculars. After a long careful look, waiting for it to get up and move, we were able to make a positive identification.

I'm sorry to say; but, you saw one of our neighbors' cats (*Felis catus*), probably in the field hopping to catch a gopher, field mouse or maybe a frog for a snack. As an aside, in Maine the Fisher is often referred to as a Fisher Cat.