

American Marten

Martes americana (Cape Breton Population)

STATUS

Not Listed



Endangered

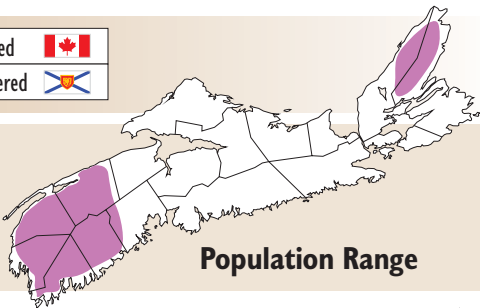


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Species Description

The American Marten, or Pine Marten, is a member of the weasel family. It has a slender body with a small sharp-pointed head, rounded ears, a bushy tail, and semi-retractable, cat-like claws. Its coat is dark with a light orange patch under its belly and throat. Males are 80 cm long (including a 20 cm tail), females are slightly smaller.

There are likely fewer than 100 marten left in Cape Breton. The southwest NS range is expanding but the population is very low.



Population Range

Habitat

Prefer mature old-growth coniferous forests, where food supply is abundant (mice, chipmunks, rabbits, shrews, insects, reptiles, fruits, and berries). In recent years marten have been observed in mixedwood forests as well as cutovers adjacent to standing timber. Resting and hunting areas are in rotting logs, stumps and burrows. They are rarely found in open fields, where there is no protection from predators or weather.



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American Marten are typically observed in mixedwood or coniferous forests, in the habitat described above.

Interesting Points

- They are agile and fast, and can move in trees for hundreds of metres without touching the ground.
- They are nocturnal, excellent swimmers, fearless, and very curious (which many humans confuse with tameness).
- Marten are called “Apistanéwuj” in the Mi’kmaw language.



Marten Release Program in Cape Breton

Similar Species

Mink:

Similar size (60-80 cm); darker fur; less prominent ears; found more often near water.



Fisher:

Larger (80-100 cm); skull wider; frosted or grizzled fur; less prominent ears.



Short-tailed Weasel:

Much smaller (30 cm), long and skinny, thin tail; white chest; fur white in winter.



Marten tracks

Front



Hind



25 - 120 cm
(10 - 48")

10 cm
(4")

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Threats to Survival

- Initial decline in Nova Scotia from unregulated over-trapping (1700-1900).
- Today, loss of mature forests, incidental trapping, and small isolated populations (few breeding opportunities) are the biggest threats.

How You Can Help

Partnerships with local stakeholders like landowners, foresters, and trappers are key to helping the marten. If you fall into one of these categories contact the NS DNR to help. Trappers can learn how to avoid accidentally catching marten and proper release methods at www.speciesatrisk.ca/martenandlynx. Foresters can follow the Special Management Practices outlined in the link below (under Info) and practice sustainable forestry techniques.

Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

Contact: NS DNR (902) 679-6091

Info: Special Management Practices for American Marten:

http://novascotia.ca/natr/wildlife/habitats/terrestrial/pdf/SMP_American_Marten.pdf

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings