

American Marten

Martes americana (NS and NL Populations)

STATUS	Not Listed 	Threatened 
Threatened 	Endangered 	Not Listed 

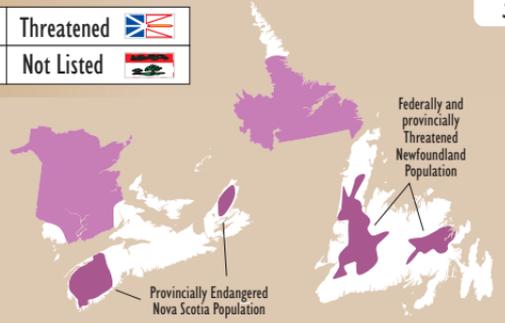


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Species Description

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

Likely fewer than 1000 marten left in Newfoundland, and fewer than 100 left in Cape Breton. The southwest NS population is expanding but is very low.



Habitat

Found in mature coniferous forests, where food supply is abundant (mainly small mammals, Snowshoe Hares, carrion, and berries). In recent years marten have been observed in mixed forests as well as cutovers adjacent to standing timber. Preferred 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 mixed wood 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).



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Marten Release Program in Cape Breton

Front



Marten tracks

Hind



25 - 120 cm
(10 - 48")

10 cm
(4")

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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.



Threats to Survival

- Initial population decline from unregulated over-trapping and from habitat change.
- Today, loss of mature forests and small isolated populations (few breeding opportunities) are the biggest threats.

How You Can Help

Partnerships between regulators and local stakeholders like landowners, foresters, and trappers are key to helping the marten. Trappers can learn how to avoid accidentally catching marten and proper release methods at www.speciesatrisk.ca/martenandlynx. Small game trappers should use modified snowshoe hare snares (.22 gauge brass or 6-strand picture cord) since marten can break free from these. Foresters can learn about special management practices (e.g., leaving mature trees standing and maintaining high amounts of coarse woody debris) from their local marten recovery team.

Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

Contact: NS DNR (902) 679-6091, or NL DEC Wildlife Division (709) 637-2026

Info: www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/endangeredspecies or www.speciesatrisk.ca/martenandlynx/

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