MUSTELA MARTES.—LINN.—GMEL.

PINE MARTEN.

PLATE CXXXVIII.—MALE and FEMALE. WINTER PELAGE.

M. Magnitudine Putorio visone major, flavida, hic illic nigrescens, capite pallidiore, gulâ flavescente, cauda longa, floccosa, acuta.

CHARACTERS.

Larger than the mink ; general colour, yellowish, blended with blackish in parts ; head, lighter ; throat, yellow. Tail, long, bushy, and pointed.

SYNONYMES.

GENUS MUSTELA. Linn.

SUB-GENUS MUSTELA. Cuvier.

MUSTELA MARTES. Linn. Gmel., vol. i. p. 95.

PINE MARTEN. Pennant's Arctic Zoology, vol. i. p. 77.

MUSTELA MARTES. Sabine, Franklin's Journey, p. 651.

" " Harlan, Fauna, p. 67.

" " Godman, Nat. Hist., vol. i. p. 200.

" ZIBELLINA (?). Godman, Nat. Hist., vol. i. p. 208.

" MARTES. Rich., F. B. A., p. 51, summer specimen.

" HURO. F. Cuv.

" MARTES—AMERICAN SABLE. DeKay, Nat. Hist. State of New York, part i. p. 32, pl. 19, fig. 2, skull.

DESCRIPTION.

Head, long and pointed ; ears, broad and obtusely pointed ; legs, rather long and tolerably stout ; eyes, small and black ; tail, bushy and cylindrical ; toes, with long, slender, and compressed nails, nearly concealed by the hair. Hair, of two kinds—the outer long and rigid, the inner soft and somewhat woolly.

COLOUR.

This species varies a good deal in colour, so that it is difficult to find two specimens exactly alike ; the under fur, however, does not differ as

On Stone by W. E. Hitchcock

Pine Marten

Drawn from Nature by J. W. Audubon

Lith. Printed & Col'd by J. P. Bowen, Phil

much in tint in different specimens as it does in fineness. Some individuals, particularly those captured in low latitudes, have much coarser fur than those from high northern regions or mountainous districts. The hair, which is about an inch and a quarter long, is of a pale dull grayish-brown from the roots outwards, dull yellowish-brown near the points, and is tipped with dark brown or black.

There is sometimes a considerable lustre in the fur of the Pine Marten; the hair on the tail is longer, coarser, and darker than that on the body, and the coat is darkest in winter; the yellowish-white markings on the throat vary in different individuals.

In the beginning of summer the dark-tipped hairs drop out, and the general colour of the fur is a pale orange brown, with little lustre; the tips of the ears, at all times lighter than the rest of the fur, become very pale in summer. The feet are generally darker coloured than the hair of the body. The tip of the nose is flesh coloured; eyes, black; nails, light brown.

DIMENSIONS.

A winter-killed specimen, exceedingly poor.

	Foot.	Inches.
From point of nose to root of tail, - - -	1	5
Length of tail (vertebræ), - - -		7
“ “ (to end of hair), - - -		10
“ fore-leg to end of longest nail, - -		5½
“ hind-foot from heel to end of claws, -		3
“ ear on the outer surface, - - -		1½

We have measured larger specimens, 20, 21, and 22 inches from point of nose to root of tail.

HABITS.

Let us take a share of the cunning and sneaking character of the fox, as much of the wide-awake and cautious habits of the weasel, a similar proportion of the voracity (and a little of the fetid odour) of the mink, and add thereto some of the climbing propensities of the raccoon, and we have a tolerable idea of the attributes of the little prowler of which we have just given the description and dimensions. The Pine Marten, as may be inferred from this compound, is shy, cruel, cunning, and active, and partakes of the habits of the predacious animals above mentioned, with the exception that it is not known to approach the residences of man like the fox, weasel, or mink, but rather keeps in dense woods where it can prey

upon birds, their eggs and young, squirrels, the white-footed and other mice, shrews, wood-rats, &c., together with beetles and other insects, larvæ of different species, toads, frogs, lizards, water reptiles, and fish. It is also an eater of some kinds of berries and nuts (as we are informed), and is said to be fond of honey like the bear.

It has been supposed that the name Pine Marten was given to this animal because it inhabits the pine forests of the northern parts of this continent, and shows a preference for those trees, in the lofty tops of which it frequently resides. The Pine Marten, however, is often called the American Sable or the Sable, and in fact is more generally known to the country people of our northern States, and also to the furriers, by the latter name than by any other.

Sprightly and agile in its movements, the Pine Marten commonly procures abundance of food. It is prolific, bringing forth from six to eight young at a time, so that notwithstanding the value of its fur and the consequent pursuit of it during the proper season, it is still by no means a scarce animal. We have had several specimens sent to us by friends residing in the State of New York and in the wilder portions of our Canada frontier, which were procured among the woody hills of those districts.

According to Dr. DEKAY (New York Fauna, p. 33), this species is so active as to destroy great quantities of squirrels, the red squirrel (*Sciurus Hudsonius*) only escaping by its superior agility. Dr. GODMAN remarks that the "Pine Marten frequently has its den in the hollows of trees, but very commonly takes possession of the nest of some industrious squirrel, which it enlarges to suit its own convenience, after putting the builder to death."

Sir JOHN RICHARDSON says that "particular races of Martens, distinguished by the fineness and dark colour of their fur, appear to inhabit certain rocky districts." "A partridge's head, with the feathers, is the best bait for the log traps in which this animal is taken. It does not reject carrion, and often destroys the hoards of meat and fish laid up by the natives, when they have accidentally left a crevice by which it can enter. The Marten, when its retreat is cut off, shows its teeth, sets up its hair, arches its back, and makes a hissing noise like a cat. It will seize a dog by the nose and bite so hard, that unless the latter is accustomed to the combat, it suffers the little animal to escape."

The Indians sometimes eat the Pine Marten, but its flesh is rank and coarse. We have seen this species in confinement, when it appeared tolerably gentle, and had lost much of its snappish character.

The Pine Marten burrows in the ground at times, and the female brings

forth her young in a fallen hollow log, a hole under rocks, or in a burrow, generally in April or May. These animals are chiefly caught with dead-falls baited with meat of any kind, birds, rabbits, squirrels, &c., and generally a hunter has many traps set, each of which he visits as often as once or twice a week. The Martens are sometimes devoured by larger animals after they have been caught. They are only trapped in the autumn and winter.

The fur of this species has been considered valuable, and when in fashion the skins were worth good prices. It is often palmed off on purchasers as fur of a more costly kind, and for this purpose is dyed any desired colour.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

This species inhabits the wooded districts of the northern parts of America from the Atlantic to the Pacific in great numbers, and RICHARDSON remarks that it is particularly abundant where the trees have been killed by fire but are still standing. HEARNE observed that it is very rare in the district lying north of Churchill river, and east of Great Slave lake. PENNANT states that on the Asiatic side of Behring's straits, twenty-five degrees of longitude in breadth are equally unfrequented by the Marten, and for the same reason—the absence of trees.

The limit of its northern range in America is, like that of the woods, about the 68th degree of latitude. It is found in the hilly and wooded parts of the northern Atlantic States. We have seen specimens obtained from near Albany and from the Catskill Mountains, and it is also found in the northern parts of Pennsylvania. Its southern limit is about lat. 40°.

We have sought for it in vain on the mountains of Virginia, where notwithstanding, we think a straggler will occasionally make its appearance. On the eastern continent it inhabits all the north of Europe and Asia.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Some American naturalists have expressed great doubts whether our American Marten is identical with that of the north of Europe, and have supposed that it might be designated under a separate specific name. We have not had an opportunity of comparing specimens from the two continents with each other, as we could find no museum in which specimens from both continents were contained. We have, however, examined and taken descriptions of them separately, and have been able to detect so little difference that we cannot regard them even as varieties.

It has been frequently asserted by hunters, that the true Sable exists

in America; thus far, however, no specimen of that animal has been identified as coming from this country. Those that were shown to us under the name of Sables by furriers, we ascertained to be fine skins of a very dark colour of our common Pine Marten.

Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1854. "Mustela martes, Pine Marten [Pl. CXXXVIII, male and female, winter pelage]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 176–180. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322498>.

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