

MARTEN

(*Martes americana*)

Weasel Family/Carnivore



NPS Photo



The marten, also known as the Canadian sable, is a solitary territorial animal except during the mating season. Like other members of the weasel family, the marten has ferocity and lightning-fast reflexes.



Newborns weigh about 30 g and are covered with a fine yellowish hair. Their eyes open at 4 to 6 weeks and they are **weaned** at 2 months of age. **Kits** are on their own by 3 to 4 months of age and establish their own territories when 5 to 6 months old.

Special features: Martens are about half the size of a small house cat. Males average 50 to 63 cm in length, including the tail, and weigh between 470 and 1,300 g. Females are slightly shorter in length and weigh less.

The body is long and slender, making it easier to reach prey in crevices and narrow areas. Martens have short legs and small heads with a short, pointed **muzzle** and large pointed ears. Their bushy tails are about 1/3 of their overall body length. Coat colour varies from yellowish buff to blackish brown.

Their five-toed paws have semi-retractable claws and large, furred pads that allow martens to travel easily over snow. Scent **glands** on the abdomen and under the base of the tail are used to mark their territories.

Martens have good senses of smell, sight and hearing. They are excellent climbers and good swimmers. They can move quickly both through the trees and on the ground.

Curious and excitable, martens hunt for prey by investigating holes and crevices in brush piles, downed trees and stumps. This makes them easy to bait and trap. In winter, they are known to hunt beneath the snow in tunnels created by red squirrels and mice. Martens will **cache** surplus kills.

Food: Red-backed voles, mice, rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, birds, eggs, fish, frogs, insects, **carion**, and fruit and other vegetation.

Denning: Den sites include hollow trees, under logs, stumps and rock crevices, as well as squirrel nests.

Predators: Large owls, hawks, fishers, lynx, bobcats, coyotes, wolves and other martens.



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Martens can climb trees with ease, but usually hunt on the ground.

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Distribution:

All Provinces and Territories
except P.E.I.

Maturity:

1-2 years

Average life span:

5 years

Mating:

July and August

Young born:

March and April

Gestation:

220 to 276 days due to **delayed
implantation** (active **gestation** 27days)
1 litter a year/Average 3 kits

Habitat:

Mature **coniferous** or mixed woods
forest, although they may seek food
in some open areas.

Management Issues:

The marten is sensitive to timber
harvesting of mature forest habitat.
Numerous protection measures
and reintroduction efforts have
kept the population abundant,
but deforestation is still a problem
for the marten in some regions.

