

MARTEN ARE BACK!

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Wisconsin is trying an experiment . . . if it works, we may see more of this beautiful animal of the far northern forests.

The newest venture in the field of experimental mammal release in the State of Wisconsin is the stocking of marten on Stockton Island, one of the Apostle Island group in Lake Superior. On November 19, 1953, five marten, secured from the State of Montana, were released by department biologists in the vicinity of Quarry Bay on Stockton Island.

Before discussing the details of the release, let's take a brief look at the marten and its habits, and the early history of marten in Wisconsin.

Burt (1946) describes the marten as one of the finest of furbearers, with soft, thick, rich yellowish-brown fur shading into blackish on the tail and legs, pale buff on the throat and breast, and dull

white on the inner sides of the ears. The body is long and slender and the tail is distinctly bushy. The legs are short and the feet large.

The marten is truly arboreal and is more at home in the trees than on the ground. They feed on a variety of items: squirrels, small mammals, carrion, birds, eggs, fish, insects, nuts and fruit. It is truly omnivorous.

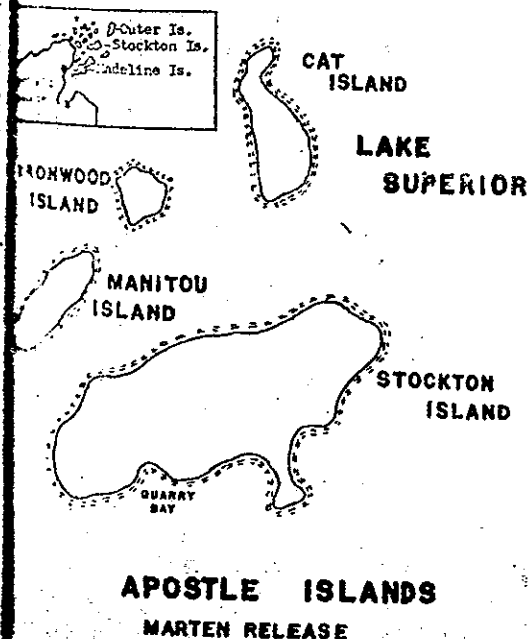
The last marten recorded in Wisconsin is one reported to have been shipped from Maple, in Douglas County, in 1925 (Scott, 1939). Scott further reports that marten were systematically trapped at least 300 years before Wisconsin became a state. The season on marten was not closed in Wisconsin until July 1921, and it has been closed since that time. In

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Wisconsin, the marten were checked by Dr. William Marshall, Professor of Entomology and Economic Zoology at the University of Minnesota. In addition to the train trip from Montana, the marten spent one night in an automobile while being transferred to Bayfield, Wisconsin which is adjacent the Apostle Island group.

Stockton Island, approximately 9,600 acres in size, was selected for the site of the marten stocking experiment. With the exception of small clearings around commercial fishing camps, the island is forested. High clay banks and sandstone outcrops characterize the shore line.

Years ago brownstone was quarried on Stockton Island. It has been over 25 years since logging ceased on the island. After logging fire ravaged most of the area.

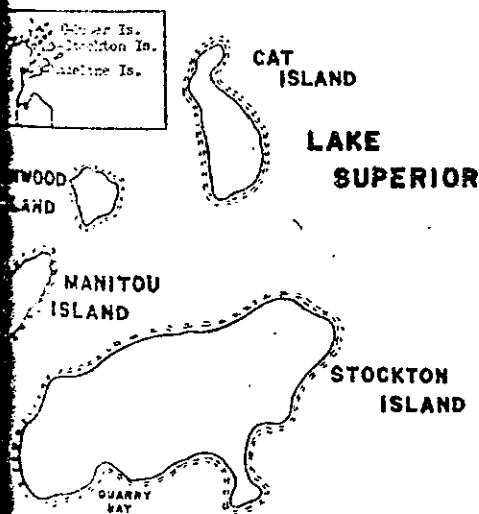
Forest cover on the island at the present time includes trembling aspen-white birch and northern hardwood types. Present also are remnant stands of virgin hardwood. Sand beaches along the shore line support a vigorous growth of red and white pine. There are a number of small coniferous swamps and bogs and a few scattered groves of hemlock.

Stockton Island receives only intermittent use by humans during the year. Commercial fishermen, deer hunters, berry pickers, and tourists spend only limited time on the island.

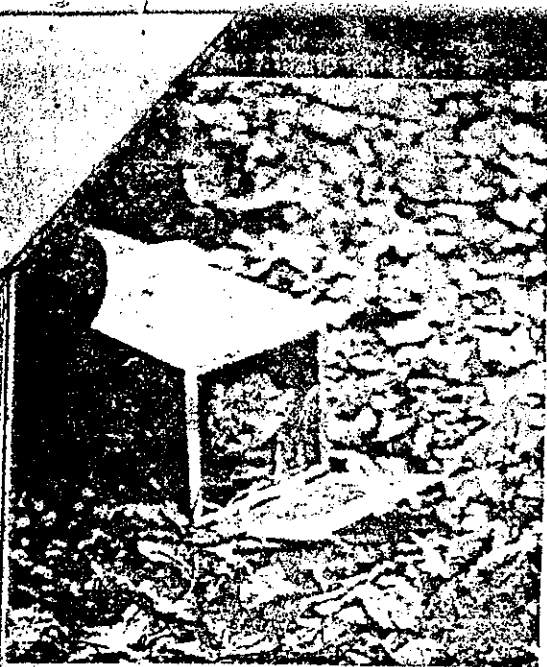
Most birds common to northern Wisconsin inhabit the island. Among mammals frequenting the island are black bear, red and gray fox, coyote, deer, red squirrel, beaver, mink, snowshoe hare, otter and small rodents.

The "Hack Noyes", Wisconsin Conservation Department patrol boat, was used to transport the marten from Bayfield to Quarry Bay. Subsequently they were carried approximately one mile to the site of the brownstone quarry.

Each marten was released individually. Three of the animals were docile and left their cages with only slight hesitation. One was vicious and left quickly. The fifth marten, which appeared to be sick, left the cage slowly,



APOSTLE ISLANDS MARTEN RELEASE



A marten peers out at his new home on Stockton Island, just before leaving his cage.

and walked to the edge of the quarry disappearing into a hole. It did not reappear. The other animals showed little hesitation in familiarizing themselves with the area. They were observed moving in the quarry and running on rock ledges before disappearing into the woods.

Rabbit and Mouse Damage Control

Gardeners should plan now to prevent damage in the early growing season by rabbits, field mice, and other animals. Better check fruit plantings for mouse injury. Field mice were very numerous in some places in the early winter. There's still time to stop damage to shrubs and fruit trees by using poisoned bait in mouse runways. Rabbits do most of their girdling in winter and early spring—apply traps and repellents. The repellents z.i.p., Formula 96a, or rosin-alcohol will reduce late winter injury by rabbits. Control method leaflets and further information are available from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Branch of Predator and Rodent Control, Experiment Station Annex, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Deer hunters using Stockton Island have been cautioned to be on the alert for marten and to exercise care in discharging firearms at strange animals.

Periodic checks will be made in the future to determine the success of the project. During the coming winter plans are to thoroughly cover the island on snowshoes with the help of department personnel and University of Minnesota wildlife students. Emphasis will be placed on determining marten movements, mortality and their adaptation to their new island environment.

As a protective measure Stockton Island has been closed to all trapping by Conservation Commission order. Whether or not the splendid marten will successfully re-establish itself here is not known. However, the experiment will be closely observed by game biologists and in the event it is successful additional releases at a future date may be made in Wisconsin.

References:

- Burt, William H. 1946. The mammals of Michigan. The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
 Scott, Walter E. 1939. Rare and extinct mammals of Wisconsin. Wisconsin Conservation Bulletin, Vol. IV, No. 10.

Pollution Control Has a History!

Think stream pollution is something new? Then you're in for a surprise. We did, until reading in "Outdoors in Tennessee", that certain primitive South American savages were required by tribal law to keep a live minnow in a jar tied in the water near each family's hut. Since these people lived along lake shores, the condition of their water supply was closely watched. A regular check was made of the "test" minnows, and if one was found dead, the offending family was fined!—*Massachusetts Wildlife, January 1954.*

A jack rabbit can run as fast as a good race horse, often obtaining speeds up to 45 miles an hour.

Naturschutz

You may have heard the expression: "They couldn't see the forest for the trees". There was a time, especially in Germany, when foresters grew trees as farmers grow cabbages; thousands of acres covered with just one kind planted in long rows that were kept free of all seedlings, underbrush, dead or injured trees and everything but perfect specimens. For a while these plantations produced astonishing yields of lumber and the Germans boasted of them as models of "efficiency". The fact that they supported practically no wildlife—only a few birds, no food for deer, and so forth—was contemptuously dismissed.

Suddenly the soil turned "sick". Insect pests swept thru them like forest fires. They withered and died. Finally the Germans turned to the planting of mixed forests, including "worthless" species such as beech and birch, where natural reproduction and undergrowth was permitted. They put up nesting boxes to attract the many kinds of birds that help control harmful insects. They actually imported and propagated some species, including owls. They planted earthworms in the soil. They found that woodlands which comprise a natural community of a great variety of living things was more productive and gave less trouble than artificial plantings. They became apostles of the *Naturschutz*—a natural forest. We now know that wildlife is valuable for more than meat and fur, or to provide sport for the hunter, or as something sacred to the long-haired few who write sentimental essays and poems about "naytchah".—*Roberts Mann and David H. Thompson.*

A total of 24 of the rare whooping cranes showed up at their wintering grounds on Aransas National Wildlife Refuge near Austwell, Texas. These are the only known surviving whooping cranes in the world.