



## American Marten - the Rarest of Wisconsin's Mammals

American marten (*Martes Americana*) is Wisconsin's only State endangered mammal. A creature of mature conifer forests, marten populations declined following widescale logging in the late 1800's. Unregulated trapping also contributed to population declines. Although marten trapping was banned in 1921, by 1940 martens had been extirpated from the state.

The earliest reintroduction effort in the state was on Stockton Island, within the Apostle Islands, where 5 marten from Kalispell, Montana were released in 1953 by the Wisconsin Conservation Department. (WCD). An additional 5 marten were released on Stockton Island in 1956. This time the marten were from British Columbia. In 1964, intensive live-trapping was done on Stockton by the WCD, but no marten were caught. The last observation of a marten on the Apostle Islands was in 1969, when one was observed on ice near Stockton Island - until now.

Fast forward to the fall of 2014 when a marten ran through the legs of a visitor on Manitou Island. Quick with a camera, the visitor photographed the marten and sent it to wildlife biologists to see what it was. Our long-time volunteer on Manitou took one look at the picture and said "That's the critter I've been seeing!"

### Stockton Island 2014-2015



So why do marten occur on the islands? And why does it matter?

Many of the islands have good marten habitat - mature forest, a lot of downed logs and Canada yew that provides cover and habitat for prey.

The State of Wisconsin has been working to reintroduce marten since 1975. Between 1975 and 2010, over 400 marten have been released in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. These introductions have not been as successful as hoped. So new sightings within the Apostle Islands and along the mainland coast are indeed welcome. Perhaps something can be learned from where martens occur on the islands and within the Red Cliff Reservation that would assist with reintroductions in other parts of the state.

### Stockton Island 2010



### Manitou Island 2014



The fall of 2014 also happened to be the beginning of a U.W. Madison carnivore survey on Stockton Island, where 30 remote cameras were set-up to capture images of wildlife. During the spring of 2015, when the cameras were checked, images of marten were found throughout the island. An earlier photo also emerged - one taken in 2010 by seasonal interpreter Zach Rozmiarek along the Presque Isle trail. Nearby, on the Red Cliff Reservation, marten have recently been verified through the use of remote cameras.

Thanks to Zach's Stockton Island campfire program on marten, there have been other visitor reports of potential marten sightings - one on Oak and another on Rocky. Northland College Professor Erik Olson has also been combing the islands in search of scat, marten scat. This can be used for DNA analysis to not only verify marten presence, but to add clues to where the marten originated and even what it eats. This scat is currently being analyzed at the University of Wisconsin.

The park, Northland College and University of Wisconsin are working together to determine where else in the lakeshore marten may occur. Remote cameras were taken off of Stockton Island and put on Bear, Devils, Hermit, Ironwood, Raspberry, Rocky and South Twin for the winter of 2015-16.

### Stockton Island 2014-2015

