



WILDLIFE NOTES

Pine marten *Martes americana*

The pine marten is a member of the family mustelidae, characterized by the presence of scent glands, 32 or more teeth, and five toes on the hind feet. Martens are most similar to weasels as both have long, slender bodies, short legs, and rounded ears. Pine martens have shaggy coats and an overall dark color – except for the buffy throat and chest.

The golden-brown tail darkens to blackish-brown on the tip. It is about one-half the length of the martens' head and body. The eyes and claws are dark brown, and the nose is black. Measurements include total length 22 to 49 inches, tail 6.5 to 9.5 inches, and hind foot three to

3.5 inches.

The marten is most commonly found in the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo mountains. It has also been sighted in the Jemez Mountains.

Pine martens inhabit mature forests of spruce fir, Douglas fir, and other conifers in northern New Mexico. Ideal habitat includes shady trees, fallen logs and stumps, lush shrubs, and ground vegetation. These animals feed on mice, voles, red squirrels, pikas, snowshoe hares, and carrion. During certain times of the year a large portion of their diet is berries.

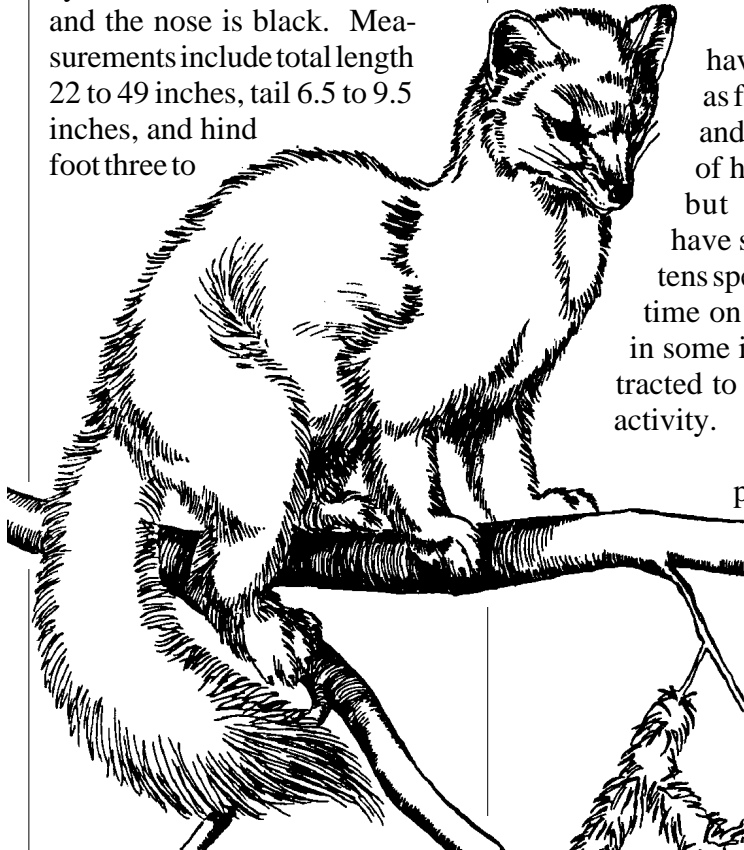
Martens have been reported as frequenting trees and being intolerant of human presence, but recent studies have shown that martens spend most of their time on the ground and in some instances are attracted to areas of human activity.

Females produce one litter of three to four young in the spring. The gestation period of eight to nine months is quite long, due to delayed implantation. The

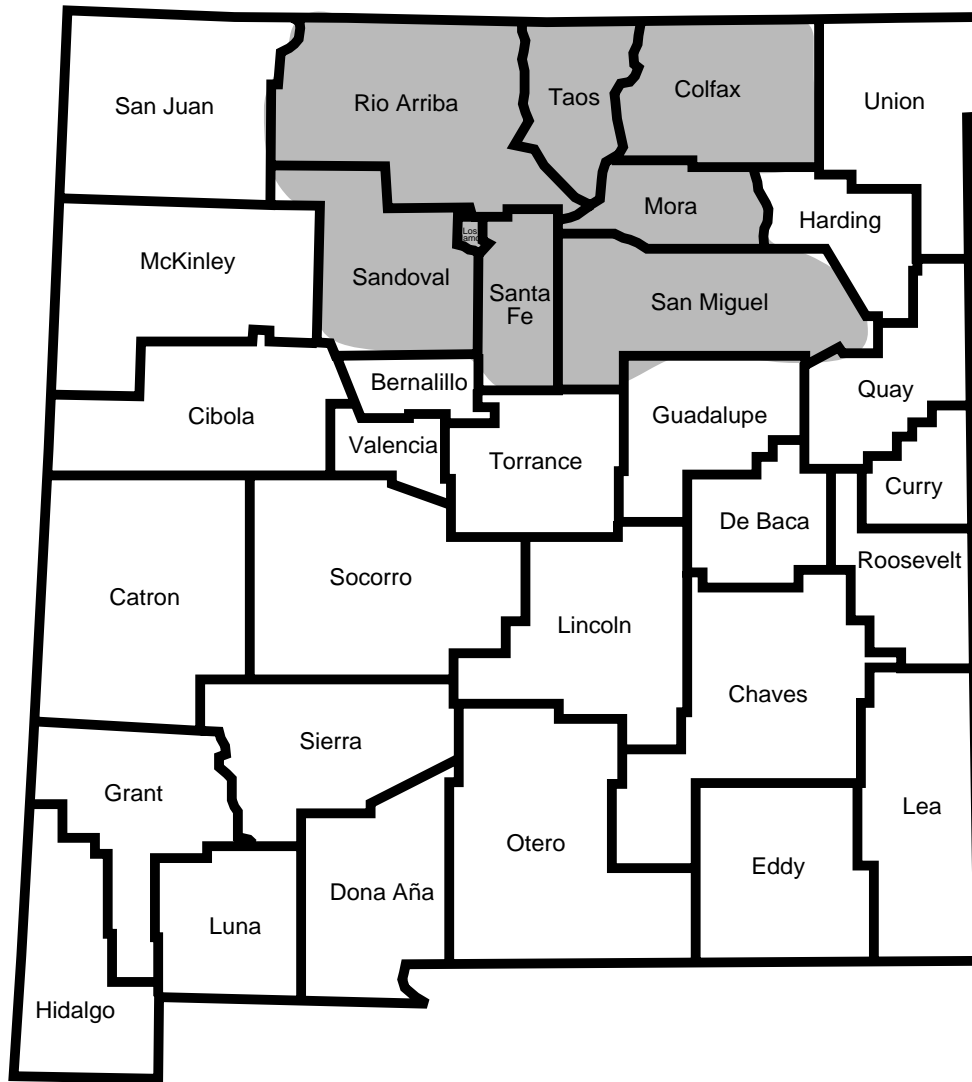
fertilized egg does not attach to the womb until some time after mating occurs.

Although widespread in North America, pine marten populations have suffered declines due to over-exploitation for furs and loss of habitat from lumbering operations and other activities. Recent records indicate that the species probably has declined in New Mexico to the point of extreme rarity. Even now, some martens may be killed by humans – including occasionally by trappers.

Habitat preservation or restoration is necessary to maintain this species in New Mexico. In addition, laws against killing and unnecessary collection should remain as they are. Finally, martens could be transplanted into areas of suitable habitat, if supported by scientific studies.



Wildlife Notes is published by the Department of Game and Fish. If you are interested in obtaining additional copies, please send your request to:
Conservation Education Section
Department of Game and Fish
PO Box 25112
Santa Fe, NM 87504
(505) 476-8119



Shading indicated area of occurrence

