

BOGDIVERSITY THURSDAY



—*from Head Naturalist Clinton*

American Marten and Fisher

POST #23—March 31, 2022

Today's post features two species! These two species are featured today because as of the publication of this post Head Naturalist Clinton, Naturalist Jason, and NRRI Staff are out in the Bog placing some nest boxes to help better understand this pair of woodland weasels: American Marten and Fisher!

Martens and Fishers have a troubled history in Minnesota. Both species were fairly common in Minnesota, but were nearly extirpated from the state in the mid-1900's due to overharvest of the mature forests each species need to survive. Populations of both species did recover to sustainable levels, even allowing for range expansion to the south and west. Even though ranges of these species expanded, fishers have declined by nearly 50% over the last 20 years due to a lack of appropriate sized tree cavities on the landscape.

Dr. Michael Joyce with the Natural Resources Research Institute has begun placing nest boxes on the landscape of Northeastern Minnesota to help provide artificial cavities for fishers and

martens to use to give birth and raise young. We are lucky in the Sax-Zim Bog to have both fishers and martens. Hopefully, a few of these awesome weasels will find and use the boxes to help researchers gain a better understand how to best conserve theses species.

We look forward to sharing some updates about this project as it continues over the next couple of years! More information about this study can be found here: <https://nrri.umn.edu/news/fisher-boxes>

More information with the photos below!

(Photos below of Fisher and American Marten by Sparky Stensaas, Marten tracks, Fisher tracks, and photos of box installation by Head Naturalist Clinton)



American Marten, also known as Pine Marten, is a handsome weasel. They are typically a rusty brown color, with paler heads and darker tails and legs. You can usually determine individual martens based on their chest blazes and we have had as many as three different martens visit the Admiral Road feeders in the last year or two.



Martens, like all weasels, show tracks grouped in pairs. Their tracks can easily be found after new snow falls in the bogs and woodlands of the Sax-Zim Bog, with McDavitt Road being a particularly good place to search.



Fishers are the second longest weasel in Minnesota, with North American River Otters being slightly longer. These weasels are especially at home in old forests and spend a lot of time in trees, both foraging and resting. This species is perhaps one of the only mammals in Minnesota to actively predate porcupines!



Fisher tracks can be very similar to canines! However, if you look close, you can count all five toes shown in all weasel tracks. More than other weasels, you will find fisher tracks in a single line as they walk frequently (vs the bounding gait typical of weasels).



Welcome Center Naturalist Jason and NRRI mammalogist Dr. Michael Joyce place one of the marten boxes that recently went up in the Sax-Zim Bog. These boxes serve as cavities for martens and fishers to use as dens or giving birth.