Marten Avoidance Techniques

To avoid catching marten when trapping smaller furbearers such as mink, trap sets should be made in habitats that marten tend to avoid. Martens rarely use riparian and aquatic habitats, as well as, open meadows and wetlands, pastures, and crop land areas. Placement of traps for mink along stream and riverbanks will greatly reduce the likelihood of accidently catching a marten.

The best method to use when trapping in upland habitats within marten range is a cage or box trap (e.g., live-traps). Using cage or box traps will allow you to release any marten or other non-target species safely and easily. Cage traps about 10" (wide) x 12" (high) x 32" (long) are big enough to catch even the largest fisher or raccoon. After catching a target species in your cage trap and choosing to reduce it to possession, you can easily and humanely dispatch a raccoon or bobcat with a 22 caliber "short" bullet. If you catch a fisher, the best method is to set the cage trap in a vertical position, place a body grip trap over the door, and allow the fisher to trigger the trap.
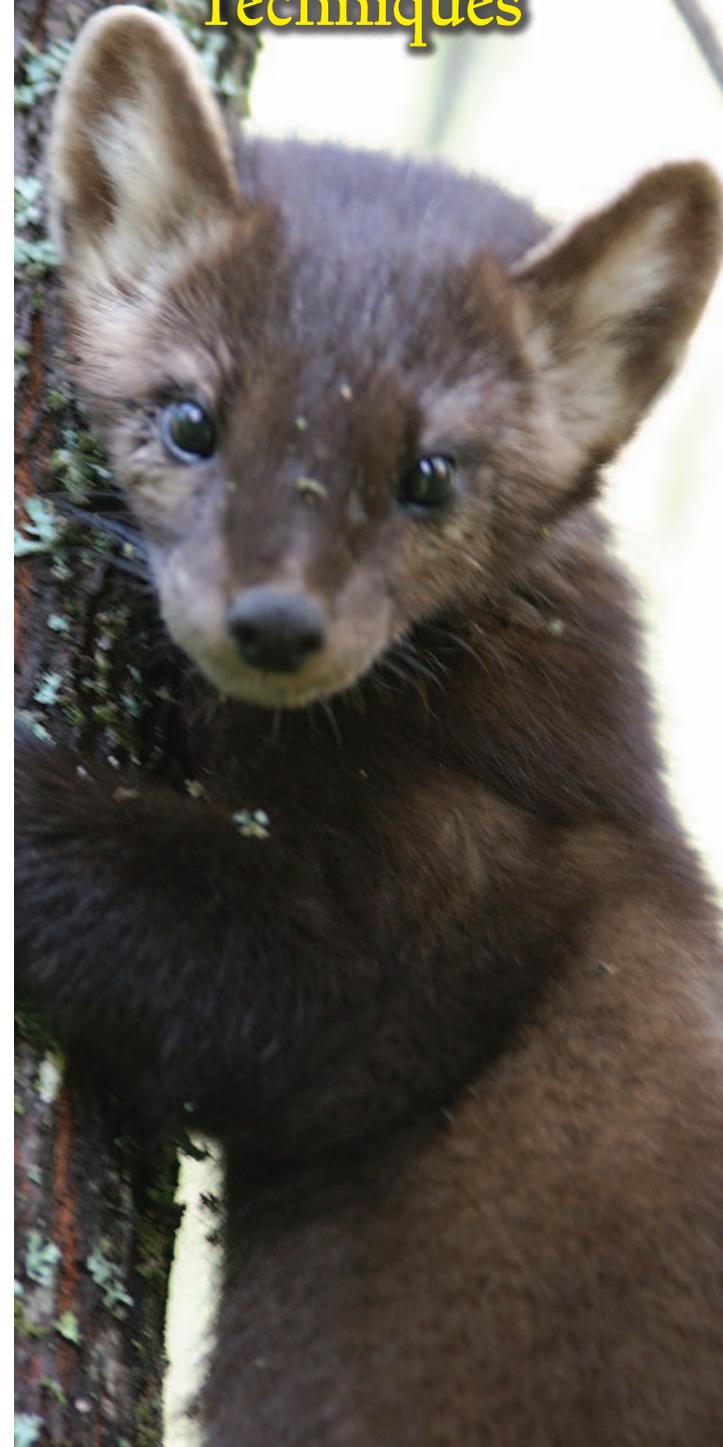
Enclosed box traps designed to catch long-tailed, short-tailed, and least weasels can be constructed to eliminate any chance of incidentally catching martens and other non-target species. This is accomplished by keeping all openings into the box trap no larger than 1.25 inches in diameter.

The Wisconsin Trappers Association, Wisconsin Conservation Congress, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources encourage members and non-members to use these alternative techniques when trapping in upland habitats in and around marten range. Thank you for your willingness to consider these methods. Your help will assure marten existence in Wisconsin for our children and future generations.

Marten in late fall, winter pelage. In most cases they have attained this pelt condition by trapping season.

WISCONSIN DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WISCONSIN TRAPPERS ASSOCIATION

WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CONGRESS

The American marten (also called pine marten) was extirpated from Wisconsin due to habitat loss and unregulated take in the early 1900s. Today, Marten are found in a few areas across northern Wisconsin (Fig. 1) but are still an endangered species and unlikely to survive in our state without your help.
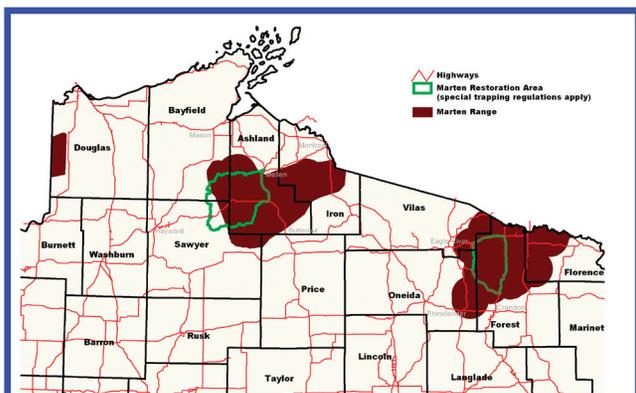

Figure 1. Marten core range (dark brown) in northern Wisconsin including the Marten Restoration Areas (green outlines) where special trapping regulations currently exist.

When trapping other furbearers in marten range, there are techniques you can use to avoid catching marten. When trapping larger furbearers such as fisher, raccoon, coyote, or bobcat with foot-hold traps, adjust the pan tension so more weight or pressure is needed to trigger the trap. Martens rarely weigh more than a large squirrel (about 2.5 lbs maximum) and by increasing pan tension, smaller animals like martens and birds will not trigger the trap, while larger animals will be caught well above the pad as the trap will only trigger once they have fully committed themselves. Also, setting the pan tension for the larger, targeted animals means better productivity for you.

Trigger placement of body grip traps can be altered from the factory settings to avoid accidental take of marten. Providing larger openings on body grip traps by bending or cutting the triggers will help you to avoid smaller animals such as marten, but still enable you to catch larger furbearers such as fisher, coyote, raccoons,

and bobcat (see examples below in Figs. 2-5). Trigger placement is especially important with body grip traps set on downed or partially-downed logs, which martens prefer for travel.
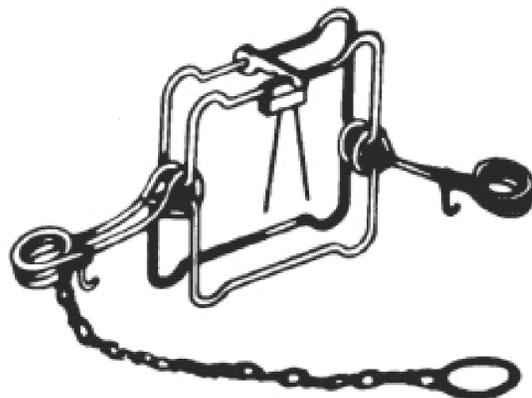

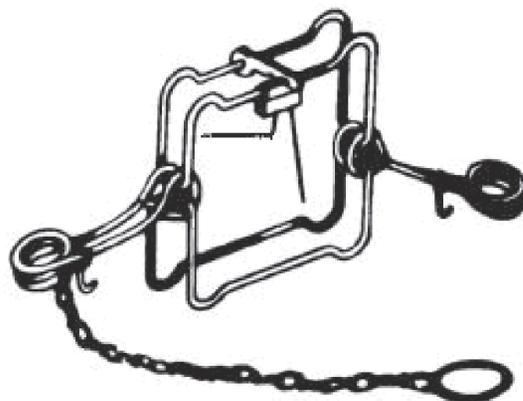Figure 2. Body grip trap with factory set trigger (least preferred)

Figure 3. Body grip trap with trigger spread (next least preferred)
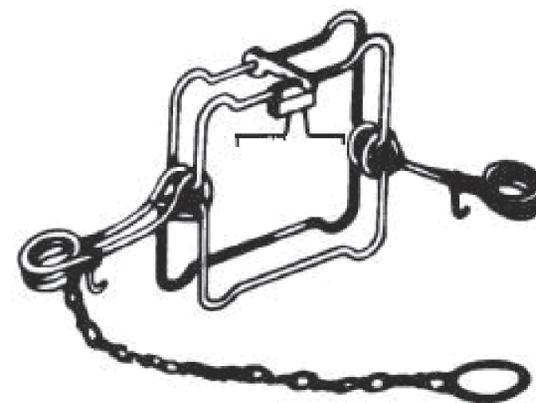

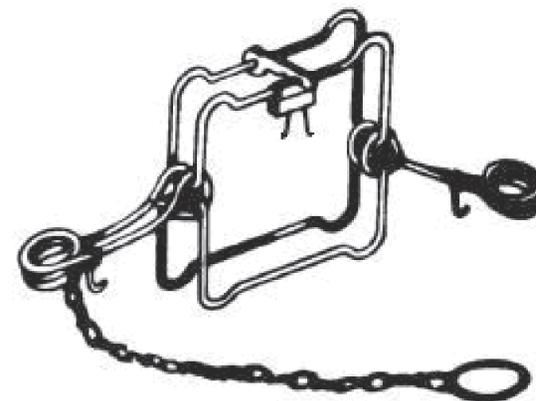Figure 4. Body grip trap with trigger spread (preferred)

Figure 5. Body grip trap with trigger cut to 3/8" long (most preferred)