

Maintaining the Newfoundland marten in Gros Morne National Park of Canada: Overcoming challenges within and outside the park.

Shawn Gerrow and Stephen Flemming

Gros Morne National Park of Canada, PO Box 130, Rocky Harbour NL A0K 4N0
< Shawn.Gerrow@pc.gc.ca >, Phone: 709-458-2406

The insular Newfoundland population of American marten (*Martes americana*) was listed as endangered by COSEWIC in 1996. Loss of habitat, reduction in landscape connectivity, and accidental mortality in snares and traps set for other species are factors limiting recovery. Only a few marten occur in Gros Morne National Park of Canada, even though the park contains approximately 400 km² of suitable habitat. A healthy population of marten in the park could enhance the viability of the entire marten population in Western Newfoundland by helping to create a functioning metapopulation. Achieving that goal is not without its challenges. Given the small number of marten presently within Gros Morne, population augmentation is required. However, before we can proceed with introducing marten to the park, we first need to address the loss of connected habitat and the frequency of accidental mortality in the greater park ecosystem. In Gros Morne, forest harvesting and snaring of snowshoe hare, which are allowed as part of the federal-provincial agreement that established the park, pose serious problems for marten recovery. In the greater landscape, industrial forestry and intensive snaring activity are threatening marten on a larger scale. To address these concerns, we are currently working on two fronts. Within the park, we are encouraging people to use a type of rabbit snare that reduces the chance of marten mortality, and are working with local domestic timber harvesters to adopt alternative ways of cutting that will maintain marten habitat. In the greater landscape, the connectivity working group has been established, with the goal being to maintain ecological connections between Gros Morne and the surrounding landscape. This group is comprised of Parks Canada, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, and provincial and federal land management agencies. It is working to provide the science for managing the Main River Watershed (1000 km² of old-growth forest adjacent to Gros Morne) for its important resident marten population. Selection harvest trials are being conducted to determine usage by marten. The intent is to use what we have learned to achieve broad landscape connections and a viable metapopulation of this endangered species.