

Canadian Natural History.

Canadian Martens.

Of the Weasel family two species, the Mink and the Skunk, have already been briefly described and illustrated in these pages. The accompanying engraving represents two other members of the same group. The larger animal is known in some localities as the Fisher, (*Mustela Canadensis*); it is also sometimes called the Black Cat, or in other parts it goes by the name of Wood-Shock or Pekan. It is the largest and most powerful of the tribe. The specimen in the University Museum, from which our illustration was taken, measured fully three feet, the head and body being two feet long, and the tail rather over one foot.

The animal possesses in a marked degree all the peculiarities of the genus, in the long agile body, short legs, alert motions, sharp and powerful teeth,

color is more uniform, and deepens into black. There is sometimes a white spot on the throat and traces of a similar spot on the belly.

The Fisher is a large, powerful, and somewhat formidable-looking animal, standing about a foot high. It chooses its abode usually in the neighborhood of some swamp or lake, and feeds, like the rest of its family, on the smaller mammalia, or even on birds, frogs, snakes and other reptiles. It is especially fond of fish, and hence has obtained one of its popular names. It often robs the hunter's traps of the fish used as bait. It breeds once in the year, bringing forth two at a birth. Its geographical range extends across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific and between the 40th and 70th parallel of latitude.

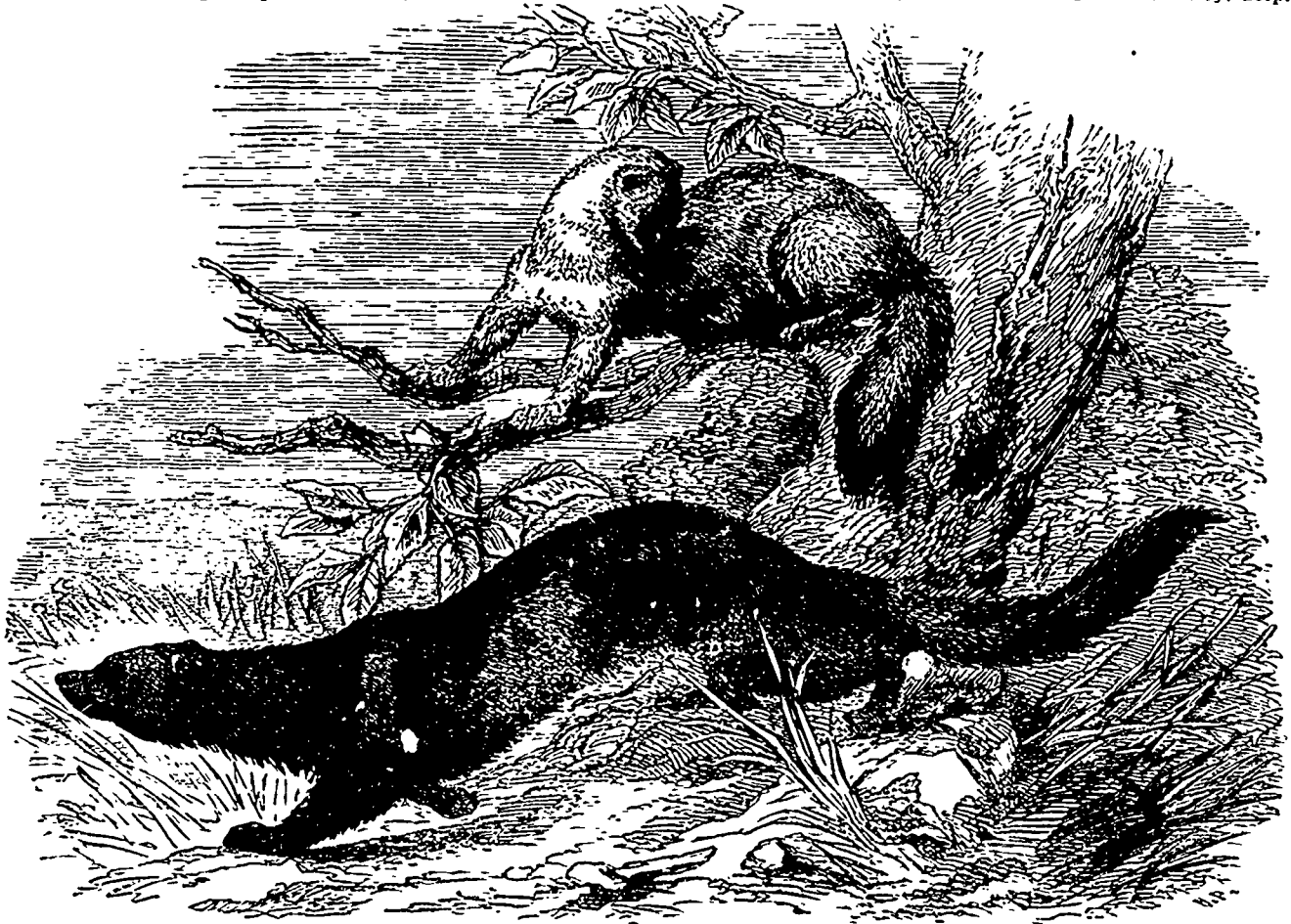
The smaller figure in the illustration represents an animal called the American Marten, sometimes American Sable (*Mustela Americana*) closely resembling and sometimes confounded with the Pine Marten of Europe. The head of this species is long and

natural food, is not tempted by the hunter's bait. Like the preceding species it has a wide geographical range on this continent, extending from the 40th to the 65th parallel of latitude.

Martens are said to be capable of domestication, but they are of very uncertain temper, and can never become very trustworthy pets. Their fur is of considerable value, and destitute of any of that offensive odour which characterises some of the weasel family.

On Skinning Quadrupeds.

When a quadruped is killed, and its skin is intended for stuffing, the preparatory steps are to lay the animal on its back, and plug up its nostrils, mouth, and wounds, if any, with cotton or tow, to prevent the blood from disfiguring the skin. A longitudinal incision is then made in the lower part of belly, in front of the pelvis, and extended thence to the stomach, or higher if necessary, keeping straight



and carnivorous habits. The color is a dark brown verging to black somewhat greyish over the head and inferior parts of the body, but deepening in hue towards the hinder parts. Its general color is indeed so dark, that among hunters it is frequently called the black cat. The head is broad, the nose acute; the ears are broad, round, and wide apart. The canine teeth, especially those of the upper jaw, are long. The fore feet are shorter than the hind feet, which are covered with hair. The toes are partially connected with a short hairy web. The tail is long, bushy, and pointed.

The fur is long, fine, and lustrous, increasing in length towards the posterior parts of the body. It consists of two kinds of hair—a short brown down, and longer and more rigid hairs. These are longer and blacker in winter than in summer. The color is subject to some variation, and there is one variety altogether white except the nose and feet. The general color of the long hairs already spoken of, however, is dark brown. On the head, neck, and upper and fore parts of the body, these brown hairs are tipped with grey, giving a hoary appearance to the fur of these parts, but towards the posterior parts the

pointed; the ears broad, short, and somewhat acuminate. The eyes are small and black, the body elongated, the tail bushy, and somewhat enlarged towards the end. The toes are furnished with long slender, and compressed nails, nearly covered with hair. The color varies considerably according to age, season, and locality. A yellowish brown or fulvous hue predominates in its fur. The head, neck, throat and upper part of its body, are of a yellowish white. The whole length of the animal is about two feet, including the tail.

The American Sable is a pretty and active little animal, inhabiting elevated wooded districts, making its habitation in hollow trees, and supporting itself on the usual fare of its genus. It is extremely prolific, bringing forth six or eight at a litter. At the time when the beech nuts are ripe the hunters say it will not touch bait, and it is supposed by them to feed on this vegetable diet; but the more probable explanation may be found in the fact of the abundance of food attracting to the beech trees at this season the smaller animals that feed on nuts, and who become an easy prey to their quick and voracious enemy, the Marten, who thus profusely supplied with its

if possible. In this operation the hairs must be carefully separated to the right and left, and as few cut as possible. The skin is also turned back to the right and left, putting pads of cotton or tow between it and the muscles as you proceed in skinning. If any oily matter should make its appearance on the skin it must be wiped away. Now remove the skin in every direction as far as the incision will admit of. Each of the thighs must be separated at its junction with the pelvis, that is, by the head or ball of the thigh bone. The intestinal canal is next cut across a little way above the anus, and the tail is separated as close to the animal as possible. After this, the pelvis is pulled out of the skin and the skin separated from the back, with the handle of the scalpel passed between it and the carcass. It is pulled gradually upwards until the operator reaches the shoulders. The whole under parts and trunk of the body being thus out of the skin, the next operation is to remove the fore legs by separating them from the body at the shoulder joint. When the joint of one shoulder has been separated from the body, the leg is again put into the skin, and the animal turned, in order to repeat the same with the other side, the limb of which