

replacement by wet meadows and prairies, erosion and abandonment of agricultural land, practices of leaving fields fallow, the failing and abandonment of small farms and concomitant growth of large-scale agri-business (with less contact between people and wild animals). All of these created habitats for badgers. Even the abundance of the pest *Rattus norvegicus* introduced into central Illinois seems to have provided a new food for badgers there.

To sum up, the badger is highly beneficial to humankind in North America, and that has been the general view by mammalogists for many years who have studied this interesting fossorial member of the Mustelidae. Special attention must be given to preserving the species in Mexico, and to improving conditions in Ontario. In British Columbia, New Mexico, California, and elsewhere, even in South Dakota where the badger is abundant, more education and management must be accomplished to improve conditions for the badger, wherever the species is not fully accorded its proper function as an interesting and beneficial component of the North American fauna.

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STONE MARTENS *MARTES FOINA* IN SIENA, ITALY

Stone martens often live close to human habitations. During 1989, local newspapers frequently reported the presence of stone martens within the city walls of Siena (Central Italy; about 56,000 inhabitants). Citizens complained about damage to roofs and noise during the night. In 1991 a survey was therefore undertaken to evaluate: 1. the distribution of this species in town; 2. the possible presence of a stable population; 3. the reciprocal impact between stone marten and man. A questionnaire was sent to a random sample of families (535, i. e. 10% of families within the city walls). 193 questionnaires (i. e. 36% of those sent) were returned, of which 183 were correctly filled in. Only 16 forms reported the presence of stone martens. The majority of sightings was in the warm season (7), whereas 3 were in the cold season (6 were unclassified). The distribution of sightings was evenly spread in town. Complaints

included: damage to roofs (3); noise during the night (2); killing of pet cats (1); and predation of eggs and chicks (1). Informal interviews revealed that some people used poison to stop this. A few cats opportunistically examined during summer 1991 revealed that stone martens frequently utilized the fruit trees common in city gardens (plums, figs, and cherries). We concluded that stone martens are not abundant in Siena; presumably, they come to town only sporadically, to exploit good food sources (especially fruits) and possibly also nesting sites. In spite of this, persecution by man may be severe.

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SMALL CARNIVORE CONSERVATION

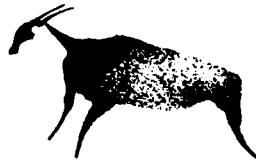


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SPECIES SURVIVAL COMMISSION



Male Tropical cacomixtle (*Bassariscus sumchrasti variabilis*) from Honduras.

Photo by I. Poglayen-Neuwall



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