

Critters

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Image: Our second marten guest.

Martens 1: Determined Cabin Owners 2. The war continues ...

This cute little fellow showed up about a month after the last marten relocation. At first, we feared that it was the same marten, come back to haunt us, but it quickly fell for the pepperoni-stick-in-the-live-trap trick, and once we saw it in broad daylight, we could clearly see that it was a different individual. This one was much more active, but less vocal (no growling) than the first, and had

some black markings on its chest, which were absent in marten #1. However, the treatment was the same – the eviction notice was served, and our guest was treated to a three-mile trip in the *Kipper* to a new home territory. Bye-bye ... hope not to see you again!



Image: Marten grinning for the camera (it was actually quite mesmerized by the camera – as Ken moved the lens, the marten’s head would swivel around to follow it).

The seastars are finally returning to our shore. We’ve seen lots of mottled stars (*Evasterias troschellii*), a fair number of leather stars (*Dermasterias imbricata*), a few blood stars (*Henricia leviuscula*), and one six-armed star (*Leptasterias aequalis*). Unfortunately, no signs of ochre stars, sunflower stars, or sun stars, which apparently have not yet recovered from the wasting disease that so decimated the seastar population on this coast some years ago.



Image: A massive mottled star (*Evasterias troscheli*), possibly getting ready to spawn.

Another critter of interest – we've had a Roosevelt elk (*Cervus elaphus* ssp. *roosevelti*) hanging about our homestead. Although we haven't seen it yet, the sign (hoof prints and large "cow" patties) are obvious; our neighbors at the logging camp have had a visual on it for confirmation. It seems to be a single animal (not sure if it's male or female, as it's antlerless at the moment), and I'm guessing that it migrated into our region from somewhere down south, as there have been no reports of elk here before.

And of course, this brings up another problem. The elk is a heavy feeder – everywhere we find sign, the grass is cropped close to the ground. They are big animals, and it clearly doesn't take too many of them to have a significant impact on the environment – and in this case, the environment I'm worried about is our gardens. Earlier this spring, our solar electric fence unit developed an issue with its ability to tolerate the heavy spring rains. We took the drowned unit into Shar-Kare for a warranty rebuild, but as it needed to be shipped to Red Deer, Alberta for this, that left us without a fence to keep deer, bear, and now elk, out of the yard. A second trip into town was required to pick up a back-up fence unit while we wait for the old one to be repaired. Happily, the fence does seem to be keeping the elk at bay – it has approached it from two sides, but not attempted to breach it yet. We'll keep our fingers crossed ...