



SMALL OTTER OF URSIANA.

# THE MARTIN\*.

MOST naturalists have described the martin and the pine-weasel, or yellow breasted martin, as animals of the same species. Gesner † and Ray, in imitation of Albertus, affirm, that they intermix promiscuously. This fact, however, which is supported by no other evidence, appears, at least, to be doubtful: I believe, on the contrary, that these animals have no intercourse, but form two distinct and inde-

\* This animal has broad rounded ears, lively eyes, a brown head, tinged with red; the body, sides, and legs are covered with hair, ash-coloured at the bottoms, bright chestnut in the middle, and black at the tips; the throat and breast are white, and the belly deep brown; the tail is full of hair, and of a dusky colour; the feet are broad, and covered at bottom with thick down; the claws are white; and the length of the body is eighteen inches, and of the tail ten; Pennant's Synops. of Quad. p. 215.

In Latin, *Martes domestica*, *Feyna*, *Gaius*, *Schizomys*; in Italian, *Fuca*, *Fenice*; in German, *Halsk. marder*; in French, *le Foutier*.

*Martes domestica*; *Gesner*, *Icon. Anim. Quad.* p. 97.

*Martes*, *allis* *Poyna*; *Ravi* *Synops. Quad.* p. 200.

*Mullera* *Martes*, *pedibus* *filis*, *corpore* *fulvo* *nigricante*, *gula* *pallida*; *Lynx*, *Syll. Nat.* p. 67.

*Martes* *faxorum* *non* *fagorum*, *seu* *domestica*; *Elton*, *Quad.* p. 64.

*Mullera* *pilis* *in* *exortu* *albissimis*, *caeruleo* *colore* *terminatis*, *vestita*, *guttur* *albo*; *Brisson*, *Regn. Animal.* p. 246.

† Gesner, *Hist. Quad.* p. 76. Ray, *Synops. Quad.* p. 200.

pendent species. To illustrate this point, I shall give a few reasons. If the pine-weasel were only a wild martin, or the martin a domestic pine-weasel, the first would constantly preserve the same characters, and the latter would be subject to variations; as the wild cat uniformly remains the same, while the domestic cat assumes all sorts of colours. The martin, on the contrary, never varies, but preserves its peculiar characters as constantly as the pine-weasel retains those which are proper to it. This alone is a sufficient proof, that these two animals are specifically different, and that the one is not a simple variety of the other. Besides, there is no reason for regarding the martin as a domestic animal: He is no more domestic than the fox or the polecats, which, like him, approach the habitations of men in quest of their prey; and he has no greater communication with mankind than the other animals we call wild or savage. The martin, therefore, differs from the pine-weasel both in disposition and temperament; for the latter flies the open fields, lives in the most secret recesses of the forest, and is never numerous in cold climates: But the martin approaches our habitations, takes up his abode in old buildings, in hay-lofts, and in holes of the walls. The species is likewise spread in great numbers over all the temperate countries, and is even found in warm regions, as in Madagascar \*, and

\* See Voyages de Struys, tom. i. p. 30.

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the Maldiva islands \*, and is never seen in high latitudes.

The martin has a fine countenance, a lively eye, supple limbs, and a flexible body. His movements are all exceedingly nimble; he rather bounds and leaps, than walks. He climbs rough walls with ease and alacrity; enters the pigeon or hen-houses, eats the eggs, pigeons, fowls, &c. and the female often kills great numbers, and transports them to her young. He likewise seizes mice, rats, moles, and birds in their nests. I kept one of these animals a considerable time. He tamed to a certain degree; but never formed any attachment, and continued always so wild that it was necessary to chain him. He made war against the rats, and attacked the poultry, whenever they came in his way. He often got loose, though chained by the middle of the body. At first, he went to no great distance, and returned in a few hours, but without discovering any symptoms of joy, or of affection to any particular person. He, however, called for victuals like a cat or a dog. Afterwards he made longer excursions, and, at last, he thought proper never to return. He was then about a year and a half old, seemingly the age at which nature assumes her full ascendancy. He eat every thing presented to him, except salad and herbs. He was fond of honey, and preferred hemp-seed to every other grain. We remarked, that he

\* Voyage de Poyard, tom. i. p. 132.

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drank very often; that he sometimes slept two days successively; that, at other times, he would sleep none for two or three days; that, before sleeping, he folded himself in a round form, and covered his head with his tail; and that, while awake, his motions were so violent, so perpetual, and so incommodious, that, though he had not disturbed the fowls, we found it necessary to chain him, to prevent him from breaking every thing. We have had in our possession several other martins of a more advanced age, which had been taken in nets; but they continued to be totally savage, bit all who attempted to touch them, and would eat nothing but raw flesh.

Martins, it is said, go with young as long as cats. We meet with young ones from spring to autumn; and, therefore, it is probable that they bring forth more than once a-year. The younger females litter only three or four at a time; but the more aged produce six or seven. When about to bring forth, they take up their abode in magazines of hay, in holes of walls, which they stuff with straw and herbs, in clefts of rocks, or in the hollow trunks of trees; and, when disturbed, they remove their young, who seem to arrive very soon at maturity; for the one I kept had nearly attained its full growth in one year: Hence we may conclude, that those animals live eight or ten years only. They have a kind of musky smell, which is not very disagreeable. The pine-weasel and the martin, like some other animals,

animals, have two vesicles, one on each side of the extremity of the rectum, which contain an odorous matter, similar to that procured from the civet cat. Their flesh retains a little of this odour; and yet that of the pine-weasel is not bad. The flesh of the martin is more disagreeable, and his skin is likewise much less valuable.

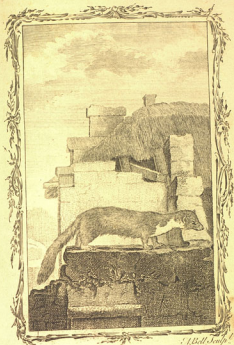
## S U P P L E M E N T.

I Have added the figure of an American animal, which was sent from Guiana to M. Aubry, curate of St. Louis. Though this animal wants the teeth, it is so similar in all the other parts of the body to the common martin, that it may be regarded as a variety of the same species. It differs from the martin only in having the colour of the hair sprinkled with black and white, a shorter tail, and spots on the head. The martin of Guiana is three or four inches longer than the European; but the tail is proportionally shorter. The muzzle seems also to be longer; it is black, and the blackness extends above the eyes, passes under the ears along the neck, and loses itself in the brown hair of the shoulders. There is a large white space above the eyes, which spreads upon the front, surrounds the ears, forms a narrow band along the neck, and disappears on the shoulders. The ears are perfectly similar to those of

the martin. The top of the head is gray, mixed with white; the neck is brown interperfed with afh-coloured hairs; and the body is covered with a mixture of white and blackifh hairs. Thefe hairs are gray and afh-coloured at their origin, then brown, and black and white at the extremities. The under part of the jaw is of a blackifh brown colour, which extends under the neck, and vanifhes towards the belly, which is of a bright brown or chefnut. The legs and feet are covered with fhining reddifh black hair; and the toes have a greater refemblance to the toes of the fquirrel and rat than to thofe of the martin. The great toes of the fore-feet are four lines long; but thofe of the hind-feet only two. The tail is more bufhy at the origin than the extremity, and the hair of it is chefnut or a bright brown mixed with black.

We have given the figure of another Cayenne animal, which feems to have a great analogy to the former. It was drawn from the life at the fair of St. Germain, in 1768, and meafured 15 inches from the tip of the nofe to the origin of the tail, which was eight inches, and more bufhy at the root than at the extremity. This animal is fhort legged like our martins: The form of the head approaches nearly to that of the martin; but in the ears there is no refemblance. The body is covered with woolly hair: There are five toes on each foot, armed with fmall claws like thofe of the martin.

Plate LXXIII.



MARTIN