



NAME (COMMON): Long-tailed weasel

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Mustela frenata*

CLASSIFICATION: *Mustelidae* (family) weasels, skunks and their kin

SIZE: Approximately 325mm (12 ½ inches) total length
Approximately 225 grams (8 ounces)

LIFE SPAN: Approximately 5 years

HABITAT: The Long-tailed weasel inhabits all ecosystem types from alpine-arctic to tropical, with a limited range into desert regions. They favor scrub and open timber forests, mixed fields and grasslands near lakes, creeks and swamps.

RANGE: Long-tailed weasels are found throughout southern Canada, all of the United States and Mexico, southwards through Central America and into northern Bolivia.

DESCRIPTION: Both sexes are noted for long slender bodies, short limbs with five toes with nonretractable curved claws, and short round ears. They are noted for their tail which is half the length of their body and has a black tip. The long body is a true brown color with a deep yellow belly fur. Depending on winter conditions, the long-tailed weasels pelt will change from brown to a mixed brown and white or all white. Males are generally larger than females.

NATURAL HISTORY: Weasels do not hibernate and show no tendency to "hole up" or hibernate during winter. They are primarily nocturnal (active at night), but frequently can be seen during the daytime. Despite their ground-loving behavior, these animals are adept at climbing trees. They are strong swimmers and do not hesitate to cross swift streams. Weasels are active both in the daytime and at night, but more so after dark.

Weasel nests are made of grass, leaves, and are lined with rodent and rabbit fur. They may have more than one home. Their home range is a large 14 ha (34 acres). Weasels are solitary except during breeding. When defending their territory, offensive actions may include approach, thrust and retreat vocalizations, chase, nest occupation and prey robbery.

When the weasel becomes alarmed or excited, they release a powerful bad smelling musk. A weasel may drag its rump on the ground to leave scent markings that informs other weasels of its identity.

FOOD HABITS: Carnivore Between 50 and 80 percent of the yearly food intake of the long-tailed weasel is small mammals, especially rodents. When hunting, it follows a zigzag pattern moving from burrow to burrow. Food sources include: shrews, young

cottontail rabbits, voles, deer mice, rats, squirrels, moles, muskrats, chipmunks, birds, insects, and bird eggs.

BREEDING: Mating begins in the months March with the spring molt and breeding season lasts July through August. Gestation is approximately 278 days and produces a litter of 4-7. Nests are made in tree or rock crevices with leaves, grasses and moss.

STATUS: none

REASONS FOR STATUS: no threats

MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION: Overall, weasels are more an asset than a liability. They destroy quantities of rats and mice that otherwise would eat, damage, or become vectors for crops and livestock.

FUN FACTS: It's the largest weasel of the weasel family and often will attack prey nearly two times larger. The Long-tailed Weasel uses a variety of vocalizations. It may screech and squeal, utter a rapid trill, and purr when content.