

Mustela vison



Taxon	Family / Order / Class / Phylum
<i>Mustela vison</i> (Schreber, 1761)	Mustelidae / Carnivora / Mammalia / Chordata

COMMON NAMES (English only)

American mink

SYNONYMS

Mustela canadensis

Mustela rufa

Lutra vison

Vison lutreola

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Small, semi-aquatic carnivore living in freshwater and marine habitats. It is a generalist and opportunist predator with a variable diet that includes aquatic, semi-aquatic and terrestrial prey.

BIOLOGY/ECOLOGY

Dispersal mechanisms

Males usually disperse further than females and can disperse up to 50 km from their natal home range, typically along water bodies.

Reproduction

Mink are sexually dimorphic, with males weighing between 0.9-1.6kg (average 1.2kg) and females between 0.6-1.1kg (average 0.7kg). The spacing system is characterised by intra-sexual territoriality with inter-sexual overlap. In the temperate zone mating takes place between late February and early April. Mink exhibit delayed implantation and gestation lasts about 39 days. On average 5.8 young are born between April and May, they start dispersing in August and reach sexual maturity at 10 months. Life expectancy is 3-4 years in the wild.

Known predators/herbivores

Nocturnal raptors and larger mammals.

Resistant stages (seeds, spores etc.)

None

HABITAT

Native (EUNIS code)

B1: Coastal dune and sand habitat, B2: Coastal shingle habitats, B3: Rock cliffs, ledges and shores, including the supralittoral, C1: surface standing waters, C2: Surface running waters, C3: Littoral zone of inland surface waterbodies, *Secondary habitats*: F9: Riverine and fen shrub, G: Woodland and forest habitats and other wooded land, I: Regularly or recently cultivated agricultural, horticultural and domestic habitats.

Habitat occupied in invaded range (EUNIS code)

Same as above plus sightings in J: Constructed, industrial and other artificial habitats.

Habitat requirements

Nearly always found associated with water, habitat requirements are determined mainly by food availability, and secondarily by the availability of dens. Mink are sensitive to pollution by PCBs. They are absent from areas with snow cover all year round.



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***Mustela vison* is a generalist and opportunist predator introduced for the fur farming industry.**

Photo: Laura Bonesi

DISTRIBUTION

Native Range

North America, excluding the north of the Arctic Circle, the most southern zone of United States and Mexico.

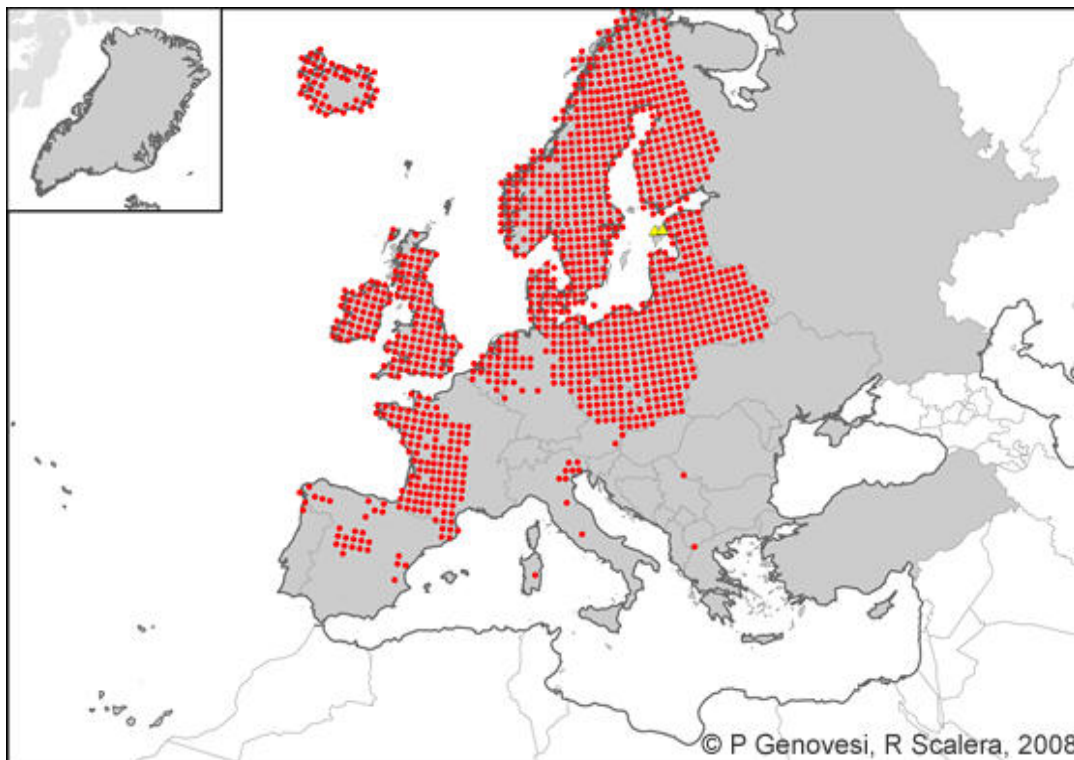
Known Introduced Range

Europe, the former Soviet Union, and in the most southern countries of South America (Argentina and Chile). Possibly also Japan and other Asian countries.







Trend

Increasing worldwide but apparently decreasing in some European countries (e.g. UK, Sweden)

MAP (European distribution)



Legend

	Known in country		Known in CGRS square		Known in sea
	Eradicated		Eradicated		Extinct

INTRODUCTION PATHWAY

Introduced for the fur farming industry or to be released in the wild. Feral populations formed because of intentional or accidental releases from the farms or because of intentional introductions. Intentional releases from the farms are often carried out by Animal rights activists.

IMPACT

Ecosystem Impact

The impact on native species can occur through predation, competition, and potentially also by acting as a vector of disease. Significant population declines of ground nesting birds (e.g. *Larus ridibundus*, *Sterna hirundo*) and small mammals (e.g. *Arvicola terrestris*) have resulted from mink predation in its introduced range. The European mink (*Mustela lutreola*), whose range is now restricted to a few fragmented populations, is threatened by the American mink through competition by means of direct aggression. Little is known about mink as a vector of disease but Aleutian disease has been found in a feral population.

Health and Social Impact

None.

Economic Impact

Can inflict damage to free ranging chickens, reared game birds, fisheries (salmon farming) and the eco-tourist industry through predation on ground nesting birds. Germany estimates the costs of impacts to be 4,200,000 €.

MANAGEMENT

Prevention

Regulating licenses to fur farms and improving fencing around the farms. Evidence suggests that habitat management may mitigate the effect of minks on water voles; in particular reed beds and isolated ponds may provide refuges.

Mechanical

At the moment lethal trapping is the only feasible method for containing or eradicating mink. Traps can be placed along the riverbank or on floating rafts. In most areas live-traps are recommended to avoid non-target impacts. Exclusion devices for otters should be used when appropriate. Research is currently being carried out to investigate effectiveness and best strategies for control trapping.

Chemical

None.

Biological

None.

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