



MINK

Mustela vison

The mink, *Mustela vison*, is a highly prized furbearer due to its coat. It is a member of the weasel family being larger than the long-tailed and short-tailed weasels. It is also more of an aquatic species than the other members of the weasel family and may be active at any time during the day.

VERMONT WILDLIFE FACT SHEET

Physical Description

Like all members of the weasel family, the mink has a long, slender body. Mink can grow to be 25 to 32 inches in length and may weigh from 2 to 5 pounds. Its coat is a dark brown to black with white patches on the chin, chest, and belly. Mink are prized for their pelts in the fur industry and in some areas are raised on mink farms to provide pelts.

Life Cycle

Mink breed from late February to early April to May. A litter may range from 2 to 10 young, but the average is 6 or 7. Mink give birth and raise only one litter a year. The young mink will become sexually mature at the age of 10 months. Mink are highly aggressive toward other mink and other animals. It is not uncommon for male mink to fight during the mating season and year round.

Mink are territorial and mark their territory with scent in order to communicate to other mink to stay away.

Food Items

Mink are aggressive carnivores seeking out prey on land and in the water. Mink will prey on muskrats, rabbits, small rodents, waterfowl, marsh-nesting birds, crayfish, aquatic beetles, and fish. They are excellent swimmers which allows them to feed in and along rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds.

Predators

Natural predators of mink include foxes, bobcats, and the great horned owl. Humans can also be considered predators of mink because they trap them for their coats.

Habitat

The mink is more of an aquatic species than the other

members of the weasel family. They can be found along streams, rivers, lakes, and marshes. Any area with a permanent water source is a possible mink habitat. Wetlands that have abundant vegetation along the shoreline are also important for mink. The mink will either excavate a burrow for itself or move into one abandoned by another animal. It is common for mink to use muskrat dens or beaver lodges at home. These dens are found along streambanks and the edges of ponds.

Behavior

The mink may be active at any time of the day. They are most active from sunset to sunrise and thus are referred to as being crepuscular and nocturnal. They are solitary animals by nature and are more aggressive than sociable.