

Long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*)



Taxonomy: Family Mustelidae. Also called the bridled weasel. Forty-two subspecies are recognized, including *Mustela frenata navadensis* which occurs in the region.

Description: Long, thin neck and body, short legs, small head and rounded ears. Color brown above, underside of neck and belly creamy white. Bushy, black-tipped tail. Distinguished from the ermine by its larger size and relatively longer tail.

Total length: 280-430 mm; Tail: 112-294 mm; Weight: 80-450g.



Distribution:

Southern Canada south through most of the US and Mexico. Common from valley bottoms to high elevations along the Wasatch Front.

Ecology and diet:

The long-tailed weasel has a broad ecological range, but is most abundant in open habitats near water. Dens are often found in dense vegetation around waterways. They are generalist carnivores that prey on a wide variety of vertebrates from shrews and mice to rabbits. Weasels are most active at night, but are often seen foraging during the day.

Life History:

Mating occurs in mid-summer when several ova are fertilized but cease to develop for about 7.5 months. Following implantation, females bear a single litter of about 4-5 offspring in April or May after a post-implantation gestation of about 30 days. Females are sexually mature at 3-4 months, and males at 1 year.

References: Zeveloff 1988; Sheffield & Thomas 1997.