

American Mink (*Mustela vison*)



Taxonomy:

Family Mustelidae. There are 15 recognized subspecies, including the local subspecies *Mustela vison energumenos*.

Description:

Mink are semi-aquatic with a long, slender, weasel-like body and a tail that is bushy at the tip. The fur is dark brown except for white patches on the chin, throat, or chest; there is a thick underfur as well as long stiff guard hairs.

Total length: 470-700 mm; Tail Length: 150-220 mm; Weight: 550-1,250 g.



Distribution:

From Alaska across Canada and east of the Rocky Mountains as far south as Louisiana and Florida. Absent from most of the southwestern US. Locally common in most of the larger watersheds along the Wasatch Front.

Ecology and Diet:

Mink are mostly nocturnal with peak activity occurring at dusk and dawn. They are strong, fast swimmers and then make their dens on the banks of lakes and streams. Mink are solitary with the exception of females and their young. Mink eat crayfish, frogs, birds, snakes, insects, and small mammals.

Life History:

Breeding begins in January and extends into spring. Gestation length varies because due to variation in delayed implantation. The average gestation period is 51 days but the embryo is attached to the uterine wall for only 30-32 days. Only one litter of 3-6 young is produced a year. They young are weaned after about 5-6 weeks.

Reference: Svendsen 1999.