



## Klamath Network Featured Creature

### July 2008

### Long-tailed Weasel (*Mustela frenata*)

#### FIELD NOTES:

##### General Description:

Long-tailed weasels are quick, agile, and alert animals, with a small head, long whiskers, long body (~20-40 cm, about 10 in), and short legs; their average weight is 50 g (5 oz). It has chocolate brown fur on the upper part of its body and white to yellow fur on its undersides. Its tail has a black tip, even in winter when, in montane habitats, the weasel turns white.

##### Behavior:

Long-tailed weasels are not social animals; the sexes live apart from each other except during the mating season. One male's home range may overlap several female home ranges, but home ranges of adults of the same sex rarely overlap. They live in the abandoned burrows of other mammals, in rotting logs, or under tree roots or rocks. Its nests are made of grass and leaves and lined with fur. The long-tailed weasel is most active in the night but also comes out in the day. It does not hibernate. The long-tailed weasel can climb trees and is a good swimmer. It uses lots of different vocalizations including squeals, squeaks, trills, and purrs. It is very aggressive when its territory is invaded.

##### Feeding:

The long-tailed weasel is a carnivore. It has a very high rate of metabolism and eats about 40% of its body weight every day! Females, with smaller bodies, have better success in hunting small rodents because their bodies can fit inside the small rodent burrows. Males pursue larger animals, such as eastern cottontail rabbits. They kill their prey by a quick bite to the base of the skull. While mammals are the food of choice, these weasels eat a wide range of food, from birds to reptiles, and in the summer their diet also includes fruits and berries.



<http://www.saskschools.ca/~gregory/animals/weasel.html>

##### Where to see it in the Klamath Parks:

The ferocious long-tailed weasel can be found at all six of the Klamath Network Units. If you see it, beware...



<http://funkman.org/animal/mammal/longtailweasel.html>



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long-tailed\\_weasel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long-tailed_weasel)

##### Distribution:

The range of the long-tailed weasel includes most of North America, extending from just north of the United States-Canadian border and south to Central America and northern South America. Long-tailed weasels have the largest distribution of any mustelid in the Western Hemisphere.

##### Habitat:

Long-tailed weasels are found in temperate and tropical habitats in North and Central America. These habitats range from crop fields to small wooded areas to suburban areas. They are not found in deserts or thick, dense forests.

##### Reproduction and Development:

The long-tailed weasel mates once each year during the summer. After copulation, implantation is delayed; the eggs don't begin to develop until about 27 days before the babies are born; the total gestation time is around 280 days. The female gives birth from late April to early May. Most litters produce 4-8 young. At birth, babies are blind, pink in color with wrinkled skin, and have white fur. At fourteen days, the white hair begins to thicken and size differentiation makes it easy to tell males from females. At 36 days, young weasels are weaned and can eat food brought back to the nest by the mother. They learn how to kill prey from the mother and by 56 days old they are able to kill prey on their own. Females mate in their first summer, but males wait until the following spring.

##### More Information:

<http://www.nhptv.org/NatureWorks/longtailedweasel.htm>

[http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Mustela\\_frenata.html](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Mustela_frenata.html)