

# *Ondatra zibethicus* (LINNAEUS, 1766)



U. Iff

## Distribution

**World:** native to Nearctic, where common in most of North America.

**Europe:** introduced to Bohemia in 1905, from where it has gradually spread. The spread was also assisted by escapes from fur farms (France, Belgium, Poland) and deliberate introductions (Finland, Russia, Lithuania). Two main distribution areas in Europe now, in western and central and in north-eastern Europe, respectively. Widespread in western Europe from northern France to central and eastern Europe (Black Sea coast). Present also in eastern Fennoscandia and northern Russia, but absent from the British Isles, most of the Mediterranean, western and southern Scandinavia. The distribution pattern may still change because of continuing dispersal and introductions.

## Geographic variation

No subspecies recognized in Europe, although clinal variation in skull dimensions occurs. The probable ancestor of European populations was the nominate subspecies from eastern Canada.

## Habitat

Lives always by fresh water, still or flowing. Banks of ponds, lakes, rivers and canals with rich riparian vegetation, and in marshes. Penetrates along streams even in mountains. In winter, builds a lodge of grass and reeds with several chambers.

## Muskrat

AL	-	LU	Bisamrat
BG	Ондатра	LV	Ondatra; Bizamžurka
CZ	Ondatra	MK	Бизамска полјанка
DE	Bisamratte	MT	-
DK	Bisamrotte; Moskusrotte	NL	Muskusrat
EE	Ondatra	NO	Bisamrotte
ES	Rata almizclera	PL	Piżmak
FI	Piisami	PT	Rato-almiscarado
FO	Moskusrotta	RO	Bizamul; Sobolanul-mirositor
FR	Rat musqué	RU	Ондатра
GR	-	SE	Bisam
HR	Bizam	SI	Pižmovka
HU	Pézsmapocok	SK	Ondatra pižmová
IR	-	TR	-
IS	Bisamrotta; Moskusrotta	YU	Бизамски пацов; Ондатра
IT	Topo muschiato		
LT	Ondatra		

## Population status

Common species. Normal densities in suitable habitats 1–2 breeding pairs per hectare, but may increase to 50–60 individuals in peak years. In some areas (e.g., Great Britain) exterminated after becoming established.

## International legal & conservation status

None.

## Other information

Hunted for fur. Because of burrowing activity regarded as a pest in ponds and other constructions on rivers.

## References

- Akkermann (1975a, b, c)
- Doude van Troostwijk (1976)
- Hoffmann (1958) – review
- Niethammer (1963)
- Pietsch (1982) – review
- Willner *et al.* (1980) – review

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