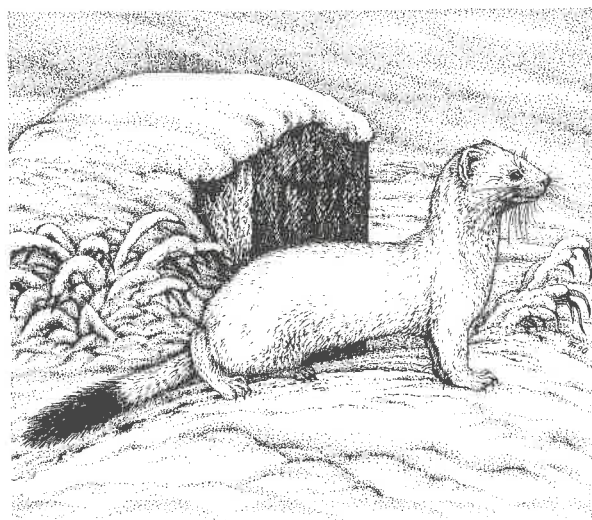


Mustela erminea LINNAEUS, 1758



F. Müller

Stoat

AL	Nuselalja e bores	LT	Šermuonėlis
BG	Хермелин	LU	Grousst Wisel
CZ	Hranostaj	LV	Sermulis
DE	Hermelin	MK	Хермелин
DK	Lækat; Hermelin	MT	Ermellin
EE	Kärp	NL	Hermelijjn
ES	Armiño	NO	Røyskatt
FI	Kärppä	PL	Gronostaj
FO	Hermalín	PT	Arminho
FR	Hermine	RO	Hermelină; Hermină
GR	Ερμίνα	RU	Горноста́й
HR	Zerdav	SE	Hermelin
HU	Hermelin	SI	Hermelin
IR	Easóg	SK	Hranostaj čiernochvostý
IS	Hreysiköttur	TR	Ermin
IT	Ermellino	YU	Хермелин; Зрдав

Distribution

World: very wide circumpolar distribution, inhabiting central and northern Europe, Asia, northern North America, and north-eastern Greenland. Naturalized in New Zealand.

Europe: throughout Europe with the exception of the Mediterranean zone and some north Atlantic islands. Naturalized on the island of Terschelling (NL), but has recently died out.

Geographic variation

In North America nine and in Eurasia 20 subspecies are recognized. In Europe not more than three subspecies are accepted: *Mustela erminea erminea*, *M. e. hibernica* (Thomas & Barrett-Hamilton, 1895) and *M. e. minima* Cavazza, 1912.

Habitat

The stoat occupies a wide range of habitats. It is a rodent specialist in its food biology, and is thus more at home in habitats rich with rodent populations. The most preferred habitats are coniferous and mixed forests, but the species is also found in tundra, boundaries of fields and meadows, shrubby river banks and lakeshores. The stoat also inhabits the summits of fells and mountains up to 3000 m.

Population status

Formerly the stoat was hunted for its white winter fur.

For example, in Finland during the 1930s a total of 30000 pelts was sold. Nowadays the status of the population is more dependent on the general structure of the habitat (many built habitats are no longer acceptable) and the abundance of its most favoured food items (lemmings, voles and/or mice). The farther north the stoat lives, the more the abundance of its prey populations and its own populations fluctuate from year to year. In the absence of small rodents, stoats tend to withdraw, if possible, to refuges with some food to await the reappearance of the next peak of their prey.

International legal & conservation status

Bern Convention, Appendix III.

Other information

The stoat is a terrestrial predator but it can also climb and swim. It may pursue water voles in their burrows as well as field voles in their tunnels inside the snow cover. In fact, the stoat may disappear for days into this subnivean life when the ground is covered by deep snow.

Literature

King (1989)
Pulliainen (1981)
Reichstein (1993a)
Stubbe & Stubbe (1997)

E. Pulliainen

