

Mustela putorius LINNAEUS, 1758



F. Müller

Distribution

World: European endemic; most of Europe west of the Urals.

Europe: widespread, but absent from northern Scandinavia, Ireland, Mediterranean islands and much of the Balkans and eastern Adriatic coast.

Geographic variation

Variability slight and no subspecies currently recognized.

Habitat

Found in all lowland habitats, especially woodlands, sand dunes, forest fringes and river valleys. Wetlands used in association with predation on amphibians. High altitudes avoided. Often associated with human settlements such as farmsteads and village margins in winter. In central Europe frequency was closely connected with density of common hamster *Cricetus cricetus* in former times.

Population status

Evidence of recent range expansion northwards, eastwards and southwards in eastern part of range, perhaps associated with land-use change and milder winters. Currently recovering from near-extinction in Great Britain, and spreading in response to diminished trapping pressure. Recent declines reported in Switzerland, Germany and Denmark. Population density often low (1/1000 ha) and rarely exceeds 5–10/1000 ha in best habitats.

Western polecat

AL	Qelbesi	LT	Juodasis šeškas
BG	Чер поп; Черен поп	LU	Sténkert
CZ	Tchoř tmavý	LV	Sesks
DE	Waldiltis	MK	Обичен твор
DK	Ilder	MT	Nemes
EE	Tuhkur; Metstuhkur	NL	Bunzing
ES	Turón	NO	Ilder
FI	Hilleri	PL	Tchórz zwyczajny
FO	-	PT	Toirão
FR	Putois d'Europe	RO	Dihor
GR	Βρομοκούναβο	RU	Чёрный хорь
HR	Tvor	SE	Iller
HU	Közönséges görény	SI	Navadni dihur
IR	-	SK	Tchor tmavý
IS	Illir	TR	Kokarca
IT	Puzzola	YU	Мрки твор

International legal & conservation status

Bern Convention, Appendix III.

EU Habitats & Species Directive, Annex V.

Other information

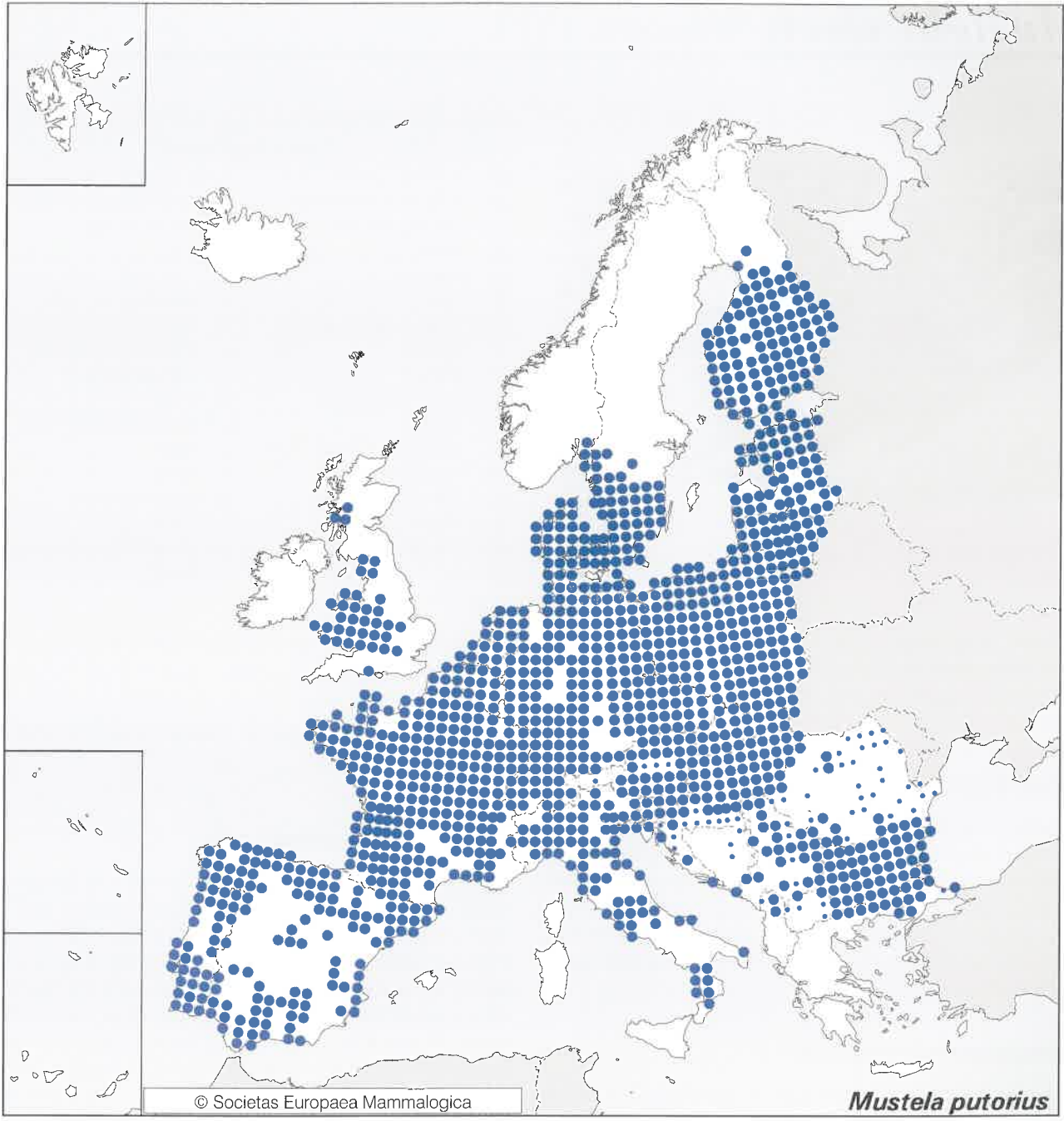
Formerly widely hunted for sport, fur and as a pest of game and poultry. Now partly protected and only a minor quarry in most countries. Accidental road casualties and secondary rodenticide poisoning are significant causes of mortality. Recognized by some agriculturalists as a useful predator of rabbits, rats and hamsters.

Cross-breeding with feral domesticated form (ferret) *Mustela furo* may produce individuals with generally paler pelage or patches of pale fur on throat and feet. Feral populations of *M. furo* established in many areas, especially on islands (e.g., Mediterranean, northern Britain, Isle of Man (UK), Texel (NL), Azores), where they may resemble *M. putorius* closely. Hybridization with European mink *Mustela lutreola* occasionally reported for Finland, Karelia and Moscow region.

Literature

Blandford (1987)
Jensen & Jensen (1972)
Stubbe (1989c)
Weber (1988)

J. Birks



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