

# *Mustela vison* SCHREBER, 1777



E. Hazebroek

Similar in appearance to European mink *M. lutreola*. Can sometimes be distinguished in the field by the lack of a white upper lip, but this character is not wholly reliable.

## Distribution

**World:** Nearctic; most of north America.

**Europe:** introduced, mostly by escapes from fur farms. Mink farming was mostly in north-west Europe and mink populations are now spreading south from northern Europe and west from Russia. Also in Iceland, the British Isles and an isolated population in Spain. The European area is increasing rapidly.

## Geographic variation

Farmed populations were selected for colour variants. Most wild populations have reverted to wild-type colour, but especially in Germany black mutants (standard mink) are found.

## Habitat

Prefers rivers, lakes and coasts, but will cover long distances away from water. A generalist predator whose diet is opportunistic.

## Population status

Spreading and colonizing new areas rapidly. The first escapes occurred during the 1920s (Finland), but wild

## American mink

|    |                         |    |                            |
|----|-------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| AL | -                       | LT | Kanadinė audinė            |
| BG | Американска норка       | LU | Amerikanischen Nerz        |
| CZ | Norek americký          | LV | Amerikas ūdele             |
| DE | Mink                    | MK | -                          |
| DK | Mink                    | MT | -                          |
| EE | Mink                    | NL | Amerikaanse nerts          |
| ES | Visón americano         | NO | Mink                       |
| FI | Minkki                  | PL | Norka amerykańska          |
| FO | Minkur                  | PT | Visão-americano            |
| FR | Vison d'Amérique        | RO | Vizon                      |
| GR | Βιζόν                   | RU | Американская норка         |
| HR | Američka vidrica; Vizon | SE | Mink                       |
| HU | Amerikai nyérc          | SI | Mink                       |
| IR | Minc Mhericánach        | SK | Norok americký             |
| IS | Minkur                  | TR | Vizon                      |
| IT | Visone americano        | YU | Америчка видрица;<br>Визон |

populations did not expand significantly until the 1950s and 1960s.

## International legal & conservation status

None.

## Other information

Hunted for pelts in Scandinavia. Considered harmful to some native species such as sea-bird colonies and the water vole *Arvicola terrestris*. Believed harmful to water fowl populations, but little evidence for this at a national scale. In many areas the European mink *M. lutreola* disappeared before the arrival of *M. vison*, but in other areas *M. vison* is competitively displacing *M. lutreola*. A potential competitor with the otter *Lutra lutra*, though data from the UK shows that *L. lutra* can recolonize areas already occupied by *M. vison*.

## Literature

- Corbet (1980)
- Linn & Birks (1989)
- Marchant *et al.* (1990)
- Strachan & Jefferies (1993, 1996)
- Stubbe (1993e) – review

EMMA committee

