



long-tailed weasel

Mustela frenata

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Carnivora
Family: Mustelidae

FEATURES

The long-tailed weasel has a head-body length of about eight to 10 inches. Its black-tipped tail is three to six inches long. The red-brown body has an orange or white belly. Some long-tailed weasels become white in the winter except for their black tail tip.

BEHAVIORS

The long-tailed weasel may be found statewide in Illinois. This carnivore lives in brushy areas, open woods, grasslands, roadsides and near farm buildings. The long-tailed weasel eats birds, lizards, small mammals and snakes. It climbs trees readily. The long-tailed weasel is mainly active at night. The long-tailed weasel uses the burrows of other small mammals, crevices or brush piles to hide in. Mating occurs in summer. After mating, the fertilized eggs undergo a period of time in which they do not implant in the uterus or develop much. Therefore, the gestation period is very long, nearly nine months. Young are born in April. A litter may contain up to nine young. Young are helpless at birth, and their eyes do not open for over a month. Males attain sexual maturity in their first year, but females do not mature until their second year.

HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: statewide

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.
Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.