

# American mink

*Neovision vision*

**Invasive: High impact**

## Species profile

- Habitat:** Terrestrial (semi-aquatic)
- Distribution in Ireland:** Widespread and abundant.
- Status:** Established.
- Family name:** Mustelidae.
- Reproduction:** Breeding season is 3-4 week period with normal litter sizes of 4-6.

## Identifying features

- Size:** Head and body length has an average length of 330-450mm.
- Weight:** For an adult male the weight ranges between 840-1805g.
- Colour:** Dark brown, but often appears black.
- White patches:** Often has a white/cream patch on the chin and throat.
- Tail:** About half the length of the body.



American mink showing its dark chocolately brown colouring - Shutterstock



American mink showing charactersitic cream patch under at the chin and throat - Shutterstock



## American mink

### Threats

Predates on a large number of species, leading to a reduction of native biodiversity.

It is of a particular threat to ground nesting birds, especially those which are already threatened or vulnerable.

The species will often practice 'surplus killing', which means they kill more than they are able to eat.

Due to its proficiency at swimming the species can make its way between islands, spreading its range even further.

### Similar species

**Spring – Summer:** Development of Summer pelage (coat) begins in late March, completed mid-July.

**Autumn – Winter:** Development of Winter pelage begins in mid-August. Summer coat is shed over the next 3 months, with winter coat in its prime by mid-November.

### Similar species

Distinctive but at a glance may be confused with similarly shaped native species such as pine marten (*Martes martes*) and Irish stoats (*Mustela erminea subsp. Hibernica*). The pine marten has an average head and body length of 480-520mm, making it larger than the American mink. The Irish stoat is smaller than both the American mink and the native pine marten. Species also have distinctive throat patches. The American mink is also much more likely to be found in or near a waterbody.



American mink may appear almost black when wet and have a long tail which is half the length of the body - Shutterstock

## Invasive: High impact



American mink are most often found in or near water and can swim very well - Shutterstock



The Irish stoat could be confused for a feral ferret especially in low light (M. Brown) Copyright NPWS



Pine marten could be confused with American mink but have a distinctive buff coloured throat patch (E. W. Delaney)

