

long-tailed weasel *Neogale frenata*

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Mustelidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

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 body fur is red-brown with orange or white belly fur. 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. Active at night, it uses the burrows of other small mammals, crevices or brush piles to hide in during the day. 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

Aquatic Habitats

marshes; peatlands; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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