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First Record of the American Mink *Mustela vison* (Mammalia, Mustelidae) in Luxembourg

by

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Résumé: Le vison d'Amérique *Mustela vison* est signalé pour la première fois au grand-duché de Luxembourg.

Zusammenfassung: Der amerikanische Nerz (Mink) *Mustela vison* wurde zum ersten Mal in Luxemburg nachgewiesen.

Abstract: The American mink *Mustela vison* is recorded for the first time in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Key words: non-native species, American mink, *Mustela vison*, Luxembourg.

In March 1993, an unidentified animal was caught in a trap by a hunter in the vicinity of the village of Manternach in Luxembourg (Fig. 1). The animal caught turned out to be an American mink *Mustela vison* (Schreber, 1777). The individual had dark brown fur and the typical white spot on the lower lip (Figs 2 & 3) (Linn & Birks 1989). Since the animal was stuffed after capture, and only came to the attention of the author in 1999, information on its sex, weight and reproductive status is not available. To my knowledge, this is the first record of the American mink in Luxembourg.

The American mink has no legal status in Luxembourg; on the international level, the species is not protected (European Mammals on Maps Committee 1999). It is not known how this individual came to Luxembourg, or whether there is an established population present there. In the past, there have been many releases of farmed mink, especially in Germany (Schröpfer 1999, 2000). Although most of these releases have been made in the north of Germany, the individual in Luxembourg could originate from a release that may have been made further south. In contrast to larger mammals (e.g., Schley et al. in press), the presence of a mainly nocturnal and relatively small mammal species like the American mink is not easy to detect and can sometimes be overlooked: in the field, the mink can be confused with the polecat *Mustela putorius* (L., 1758) and with pine and beech martens *Martes martes* (L., 1758) and *M. foina* (Erxleben, 1777).

Because of the problems associated with non-native species, and mammals in particular (e.g., Maizeret 1990), and in view of the already precarious situation of small game species in Luxembourg (Schley et al. 1998), it would appear that the American mink constitutes an undesirable species in this country. In fact, the species

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Fig. 1. Geographic location of the mink record in Luxembourg (★). ● indicates Luxembourg-City.



Fig. 2. American mink found in Luxembourg. Photograph: Michel Schaul.



Fig. 3. Ventral view on the white patch on the lower lip of the American mink. Photograph: Michel Schaul.

has been cited as a heavy predator of birds and voles, and as a possible competitor for both the polecat and the otter *Lutra lutra* (L., 1758) (Birks 1993, Lodé 1993, Lambin et al. 1996, Craik 1997, Banks et al. 1999). However, considering the speed at which the species is expanding its geographic distribution range in Europe (European Mammals on Maps Committee 1999), a more regular presence of the American mink in Luxembourg in the future seems likely.

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