

# American Mink

**Irish Name:** Minc Mheiriceánach

**Scientific Name:** *Mustela vison*



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Mink look very similar to otters, though they are smaller. They have a long, slender body, are covered in a thick fur, have a long, furry tail and webbed feet. Their eyesight is not very good and though they do not usually make much noise, they can produce a high-pitched call when alarmed.

Mink are carnivorous animals, which means they are meat-eaters. Being semi-aquatic and good swimmers, fish form a large part of their diet, as well as crabs, rodents, frogs and birds. To be near their source of food, mink are usually found near water. Each adult mink lives in a den and has its own territory, which it marks with its scent. No animals hunt mink for food so they are at the top of their foodchain. As they have such a thick fur to keep them warm during a cold winter, they have no need to hibernate and so hunt for prey all through the year, usually in the afternoon and after dark.

### FACT FILE:

**Colour:** Dark brown fur.

**Length:** 45-65 cm. Males are bigger than females.

**Diet:** Fish, crabs, rodents, frogs and birds.

**Habitat:** Usually found near water, such as rivers, lakes, canals and along the coast.

The American Mink is not native to Ireland. The species originated in North America and was first brought to Ireland in the 1950s, to be farmed for its thick fur for winter clothing. Some of these animals escaped or were released from captivity and went on to breed in the wild. Since then the American Mink has colonised every county in Ireland. It is listed as an invasive species in Ireland and is not protected. Many consider it a pest and a problem for fish stocks and waterbirds.

Though there is a European Mink, this species has never reached Ireland's shores. It looks similar to the American Mink but is smaller.



### Family

Minks belong to the mustelid family - carnivorous animals that have short legs and long bodies. Members of the family include otters, pine marten, badger and stoat.

Mink reproduce in early spring and carry their young from about 1 month to 80 days. When they give births, usually to about 3-5 young known as kits, they are born blind and naked.