

Stoat

Mustela erminea

Mammal · Here all year · does not hibernate



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A long, low, supple hunter with chestnut-brown upperparts, a clean creamy-white belly and, crucially, a black tip to the tail that it keeps in every coat. Stoats are larger than weasels and bound with an arched back. They hunt hedgerow, woodland, rough grassland and riverbank around Dumfries. In colder parts of Scotland the winter coat can turn white — ermine — with the black tail tip retained.

BEHAVIOUR

Stoats are bold and relentless hunters, able to kill a rabbit several times their own weight by following it into its burrow. They hunt by scent along hedges, walls and drystone dykes, and their long thin body — superb for entering burrows — loses heat fast, so they must eat frequently. They are famously curious and will often stop, stand upright and stare at a watcher before vanishing.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Mustelids (Mustelidae)
SIZE	Body 24-32 cm plus a 9-14 cm black-tipped tail
UK STATUS	Widespread; not protected

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