

Weasel

Mustela nivalis

Mammal · Here all year · does not hibernate



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A tiny, elongated predator, chestnut above and white below with a wavy rather than straight border between the two, and a short tail with no black tip — the quickest way to separate it from a stoat. Weasels hunt the rough grassland, hedge bottoms, drystone dykes and woodland edge around Dumfries, and are so small and fast that most sightings are a brown blur crossing a path.

BEHAVIOUR

The weasel's body is narrow enough to follow a field vole into its own runway and burrow, which makes it the most specialised small-mammal hunter here. That shape comes at a cost: a huge surface area for its size means constant heat loss, so a weasel must eat around a third of its body weight daily and hunts in short bursts around the clock. Populations rise and fall with the vole cycle.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Mustelids (Mustelidae)
SIZE	Body 17-24 cm · Britain's smallest carnivore
UK STATUS	Widespread; not protected

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