

POLECAT

PUSIELA PUTORIS

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:

More bushy and colourful than mink. The fur is black on the stomach and light-coloured on the back. The face is black, yellow and white patterned. Body length is 30 - 45 cm, tail 10 -15 cm, weight 400 - 1500 g, females are much smaller and more slender than males.

DISTRIBUTION AREA:

Southern and Central Finland, but also rarely up to the 65th northern parallel.

HABITAT:

In the cultivation areas, seldom in the forests. Often settles down under barns or cowsheds. Favours the vicinity of the water.

LIFESTYLE:

Polecats are solitary hunters and are active mainly at night. It is very lively by nature. Moves skipping, swims and dives well. Polecat may get used to the presence of a human, if not hunted. Males have large territories, which they patrol regularly in search of prey. Females have smaller territories that may overlap those of other females and males. Territories are marked by secretions of an oily, pungent musk.

NOURISHMENT:

Little mammals, fish, frogs, birds, eggs and chicks. Eats also carcasses and stores food.

BREEDING:

Mating season in spring. Nest is in a sheltered place like underground in a hole or under a building. Polecat gives birth to 3-8 cubs in the end of May or in the beginning of June. Polecat may live for 10 years, even more.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE POPULATION:

Amounts of European polecat have changed greatly. In 1940s feared for the disappearing of the species in Finland. Later it has become more common. Polecat population is very dependent on mole population. Very harsh winters with lots of snow can be an ordeal to polecat too.

HUNTING:

The most common traps, when hunting a mink alive, have often been fatal to polecats. Open season all the year round.

