

Stoats and other mustelids

Stoats, ferrets and weasels belong to a group of animals called mustelids. Mustelids are carnivores with long, thin, furry bodies. Stoats have a black tip on the end of their tail.

The impacts of mustelids

Stoats and other mustelids will eat native and endemic birds, their chicks and eggs, invertebrates, rodents, lizards, hedgehogs and fish. They are carnivores and only eat other animals. Stoats can climb trees and swim a few kilometres, and they hunt day and night.



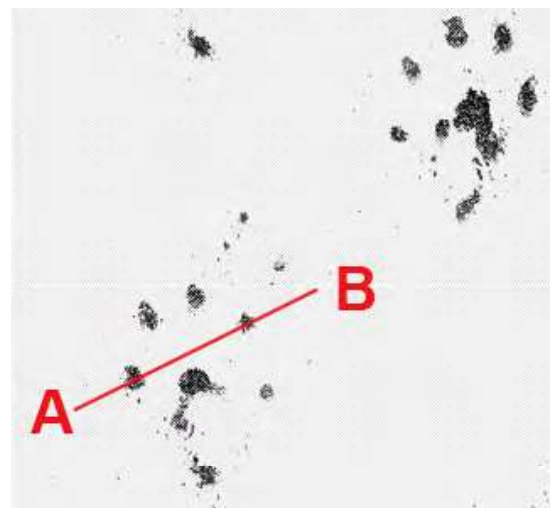
Ferret, showing upper body and head.

Why did people bring mustelids to New Zealand?

Mustelids were brought here in the 1870s and 1880s to try to deal with the huge number of rabbits at the time. Mustelids' favourite food is rabbit but unfortunately people back then didn't understand how dangerous these animals would also be for our New Zealand birds.

Mustelid facts:

- Weasels are the smallest mustelids and ferrets are the biggest
- Stoats are the number one enemy of our native birds because they kill so many of them
- In Te Reo Māori stoats are known as Toriura
- If you draw a line from the first to the fourth toe of a stoat footprint the line will be in front of the foot pad



Stoat footprints (top) and stoat droppings (bottom).
Photos: DOC