



Muskrat

(*Ondatra zibethicus*)

Originated in North America. Introduced in France in 1920 for the fur industry

Description

- Semi-aquatic rodent weighing between 0.6 and 2 kilograms
- Dark brown, thick, waterproof fur, grey fur on the stomach
- A stocky body approximately 30 centimetres long
- A thin tail flattened vertically, approximately 20 cm long, with scaly skin
- Short snout, small eyes and short ears hidden under the fur
- The rear feet are not palmed, but the toes are covered with tufts of hairs
- Chisel-shaped incisors, yellow-orange in adults
- Two musk glands are located under the skin near the rectum
- Life expectancy is approximately 4 years in the natural environment

Ecology and reproduction

- Habitats range from running to stagnant waters with high levels of aquatic vegetation
- The animals dig burrows into banks and build huts
- They are active primarily at dusk and during the night
- The species is essentially herbivorous, though it occasionally eats molluscs and crustaceans
- The females bear young 3 to 4 times per year with 3 to 7 young per litter

Documentation

- Sarat E. (coord.) 2012. Vertébrés exotiques envahissants du bassin de la Loire (hors poissons) : connaissances et expériences de gestion. Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage, Plan Loire Grandeur Nature, 128 pp.
- Nepveu C. 2002. Les espèces animales et végétales susceptibles de proliférer dans les milieux aquatiques et subaquatiques - Fiches espèces animales (Les espèces exotiques). Agence de l'eau Artois-Picardie. 98 pp.

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Classification

Order	Rodents
Family	<i>Muridae</i>
Genus	<i>Ondatra</i>
Species	<i>O. zibethicus</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)

