

# Diversity and conservation status of mustelids in Mexico

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The diversity of native mustelid species in Mexico is relatively high. The following 15 species are distributed in the country: tayra (*Eira barbara*), grison (*Galictis vittata*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), hooded skunk (*Mephitis macroura*), three hog-nosed skunks (*Conepatus mesoleucus*, *C. leuconotus*, and *C. semistriatus*), three spotted skunks (*Spilogale gracilis*, *S. putorius*, and *S. pygmaea*), northern river otter (*Lutra canadensis*), southern river otter (*Lutra longicaudis*), sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), and long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*). The largest species is the tayra (5 kg) and the smallest one the pygmy skunk (0.3 kg) (Leopold, 1959; Hall, 1981; Ceballos & Navarro, in press).

Practically all these mustelid species, but the northern river otter and the sea otter, were widely distributed in Mexico in historic times. Human activities such as indiscriminate hunting and habitat destruction have caused population declines in all the species in recent decades. Most species however, are considered out of danger because they have been able to cope with the transformation of their habitats. Unfortunately, several species are in danger of extinction. Overexploitation of both the sea otter and the northern river otter caused their extirpation from the country. The pygmy skunk, the southern river otter and the grey-headed tayra (*E. b. senex*) are considered threatened or endangered throughout their geographic ranges. The problems faced by the grey-headed tayra and the pygmy spotted skunk are discussed in detail in the Action Plan for the Conservation of Mustelids and Viverrids (Schreiber et al., 1989).

Two species, the American badger and the grison, although not globally endangered, face severe conservation

problems in Mexico (Ceballos & Navarro, in press). The badger populations, who are considered predators of small domestic animals, have been decimated by hunting and poisoning. Predator control campaigns using non-specific pesticides, such as compound 1080 (Sodium fluoracetate), were carried out until recent years. Presently, the use of 1080 is illegal but there are enormous problems to enforce the law. Badgers are protected in La Michilia and Mapimi biosphere reserves in the state of Durango. Badgers are quite abundant in the USA states bordering Mexico.

The conservation status of the grison throughout its geographic range is unknown. There are few records of grison in Mexico, most from tropical rain forests. Such forests are disappearing really fast in the country threatening the long-term survival of this species (Ceballos & Navarro, in press). A few populations are protected in reserves such as Sian Ka'an (Quintana Roo), Los Tuxtlas (Veracruz), and Montes Azules (Chiapas). However, a long-term study of its distribution and ecology is required.

## References

- Ceballos, G. & Navarro, D. In press. Diversity and conservation of Mexican mammals. *In: Latin American mammalogy: Ecology, evolution and conservation* (M. A. Mares & D. J. Schmidly, eds.). Oklahoma University Press.
- Hall, E. R. 1981. *The mammals of North America*. Wiley-Interscience, New York.
- Leopold, A. S. 1959. *Fauna silvestre de Mexico*. IMRNAR, Mexico, D. F.
- Schreiber, A., Wirth, R., Riffel, M. & Van Rompaey, H. 1989. *Weasels, civets, mongooses, and their relatives. An Action Plan for the conservation of mustelids and viverrids*. IUCN, Gland.

## News from CITES

The Government of India has submitted to the CITES Secretariat the following list of mustelid and viverrid species for inclusion in Appendix III:

<i>Martes flavigula</i>	Yellow-throate marten (including <i>Martes gwatkinsi</i> , the Nilgiri marten)
<i>Martes foina intermedia</i>	Central Asian stone marten
<i>Mustela altaica</i>	Mountain weasel
<i>Mustela erminea</i>	Stoat
<i>Mustela kathiah</i>	Yellow-bellied weasel
<i>Mustela sibirica</i>	Siberian weasel
<i>Arctictis binturong</i>	Binturong
<i>Paguma larvata</i>	Masked palm civet
<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>	Common palm civet
<i>Paradoxurus jerdoni</i>	Brown palm civet

<i>Viverra megaspila</i>	Large-spotted civet
<i>Viverra zibetha</i>	Large Indian civet
<i>Viverricula indica</i>	Small Indian civet
<i>Herpestes auro punctatus</i>	Small Indian mongoose
<i>Herpestes edwardsi</i>	Indian grey mongoose
<i>Herpestes fuscus</i>	Indian brown mongoose
<i>Herpestes smithii</i>	Ruddy mongoose
<i>Herpestes urva</i>	Crab-eating mongoose
<i>Herpestes vitticollis</i>	Stripe-necked mongoose

The listing of these species became effective on 16 March 1989.

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