



# Polecat

*Mustela putorius*

## Quick facts

**Order** Carnivora

**Conservation status**

GB *Least concern*

RE CE E V NT **LC** DD

England *Least concern*

Scotland *Endangered*

Wales *Least concern*

Global *Least concern*

**GB trend** *Increasing*

**Size** Males 33 - 45 cm,  
females 32 - 39 cm; tail  
length: 12 - 19 cm

**Weight** 0.5 - 1.9 kg, males  
heavier

**Life span** 5 years in the wild



**Mammal  
SOCIETY**

The polecat has blackish guard hairs and a yellow undercoat. The 'mask' on the face is distinctive. Will hybridise with ferrets; hybrids often has paler fur and faded facial markings, but telling them apart is very difficult without genetic testing.

### Habitat

Urban & gardens, deciduous woodland, grassland, mixed woodland, arable land.

### Behaviour

Commonly found in rabbit burrows, especially in summer. Frequently move to farmyards in winter. Territory size varies according to habitat and food availability. Less territorial than other mustelids, possibly because of the need to move around to exploit seasonally abundant food sources. Produces pungent, unpleasant scent from glands near anus.

### Diet & Feeding

Rabbits (hunted within their burrows), rats (especially in winter), birds, frogs.

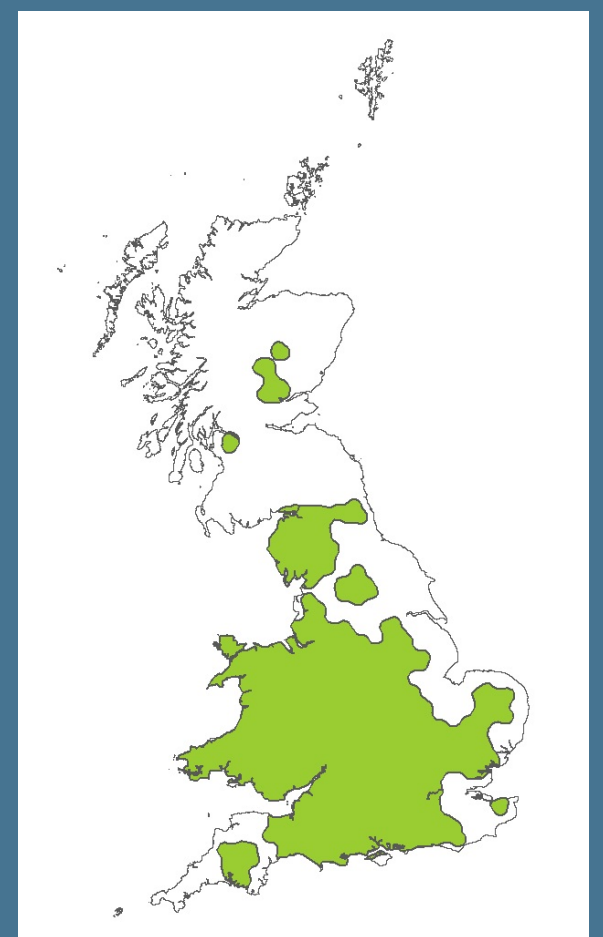
### Reproduction

1 litter of 5 - 10 young born in late May - early June, stays with mother for 2 - 3 months.

### Conservation & Threats

Protected under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is a UK BAP species. Until the 19th century, it was found throughout Britain and the Isle of Wight; distribution dramatically decreased due to habitat fragmentation, persecution by gamekeepers, trapping for fur. Road accidents remain a major threat, as it is often attracted to road kill.

### Range



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