

June 1, 1910, north-east of Guelph, Ont., I saw a weasel carrying a young one in its mouth as it followed along the bottom of a fence leading from a strip of woods. This individual may have been *M. cicognanii*.

SHORT-TAILED WEASEL, *Mustela cicognanii*  
(Bonaparte).

The Short-tailed or Bonaparte's Weasel is the most abundant species in Canada. Its numbers like other mammals of course are very variable as regards locality. Under favorable conditions *M. cicognanii* usually claims first notice throughout its range; the latter, including that of its closely allied races, covers almost the entire Dominion from coast to coast. Its range in the United States is governed by the boreal conditions existing in the Canadian and Upper Transition zones.

The summer color above is much like *M. longicauda*, a warm brown; under parts white, but sometimes tinged with sulphur-yellow. In winter the fur is pure white with a slight xanthic diffusion on tail, rump and hind legs. This stain is thought to exude to some extent from the odorous glands situated at the base of the tail. The latter is one-third its total length, and the black tip one-third the length of the tail.

Measurements of *M. cicognanii*: Total length about 11½ inches (292 mm.); tail vertebrae, 3¾ inches (95 mm.); hind foot, 1½ inches (38 mm.)

The female is considerably smaller, probably as much as one-fifth.

With the exception of the narrow belt of the Upper Austral zone above Lake Erie, this species ranges over the entire province of Ontario. It is common in the counties of Wellington and Waterloo. In a recent letter, Mr. Saunders informs me that he had no record of this species from London or the western part of the peninsula, but has skins from Durham and Ottawa, and a record by Hobson from Woodstock.

Winter is the time when this weasel is most in evidence. The dainty paired tracks may be seen in the snow about fences, log heaps, wind-falls, etc., representing vividly the wanderings of the night. In this the weasel is absolutely tireless, and withal, a very eager hunter. The white fur renders it almost invisible; except for the black tip on the tail it might bound by unseen.

The ermine trail may easily be distinguished from that of all other animals by its size in conjunction with the symmetry of its paired tracks. The mink trail is similar, but very much larger. The hind feet register almost, if not exactly in the front-foot impressions, with the right front and hind feet lagging slightly behind. The sequence of tracks with a bounding animal is not as regular between in-

dividual impressions as that of a running or walking animal, due to the variation in the length of jumps from time to time. The ermine being a bounding animal leaves a wide range of space lengths between imprints. The distance normally is about 19 inches, representing a regular rate of travel. The "jumps," however, depend entirely upon the mood, purpose or demands of the traveller. Sometimes they are no further apart than 6 or 8 inches; obviously the ermine is slowing down for more acute observation, scents prey or some similar reason. In traversing open spaces they resort to long, graceful leaps upwards of six feet in length. On January 5, 1919, I measured a record for *M. cicognanii*, a remarkable jump of 8 feet, 2 inches. The larger species should naturally be able to exceed this, but whether they do or not I am unable to say.

For pure audacity, I have seen enough of this species to prompt his classification as a ring-leader. Weasel reputation is, however, I think, very largely exaggerated. In rural sections the animal is seldom discussed apart from the hen-roost, for it seems firmly impressed upon the population that every weasel, big and little, here or there, now or anytime, is by right, might and heritage a blood soaked villain of endless carnage. But then some reasoning would dispel that view. Unfortunately for the whole lot the evil of one jeopardizes all. Individual temperament in animals is probably quite as diversified as in human beings, wherewith due allowance should be made for individual exception. Weasels do stand on the aggressive, but only a few interfere with the farmer.

I remember a little incident that happened on a summer night a number of years ago. About ten o'clock an old mother hen covering a brood of chicks, near the house, began to cackle anxiously, becoming gradually more positive until in about five minutes she opened up with a whirlwind of vociferous hysterics, sufficient to arouse the soundest sleeper. I dressed hurriedly and with light invaded the troubled region, expecting to find a skunk (*Mephitis*) on a stroll with views and tastes similar to certain southern dwellers, but it was only a solitary little *M. cicognanii*. Three chicks had been killed and the remainder was under very active consideration.

At Edmonton they were very common during 1912-14. In two or three weeks each of two winters I trapped about sixty ermine over an area of not more than nine square miles. A great deal of this area escaped the trap in running the lines making it safe to discount one-third, leaving six square miles. I believe when I ceased operation that nearly as many remained free as were taken. Halving sixty for the one year and doubling for