

## **MINK (*MUSTELA VISON*)**

Mink are not native to this country, having been introduced in 1929 for breeding on fur farms. Due to escapes and liberation by animal rights activists however they soon colonised our native rivers after the first reported breeding incident on the river Teign in Devon in 1957.

### **APPEARANCE**

The mink is similar in appearance to our native stoat and weasel but is considerably larger with males weighing up to 1.4kg. Colour can vary greatly from the usual dark brown to black through to grey and even white. Most colour variations have a white chin patch, sometimes with larger patches of white on the under parts of the body. Males can reach a length of 600mm from nose to tail with the females being somewhat smaller and only about half the weight of the male.



### **LIFE CYCLE**

Mink are solitary animals for most of the year only briefly coming together for mating in early spring. Five to six young are born between 6 to 7 weeks later and are weaned at 8 weeks but do not attain full size until four months. These young remain with the mother until late summer when they disperse to lead a solitary life until early the next spring when they are mature enough for breeding.

### **FEEDING HABITS**

Mink are voracious hunters and will take any prey they can overcome which can vary from small fish to large cygnets. Rabbits, rats, voles, fish and many ground dwelling birds quickly fall prey to any mink moving into new territory which is often en route to a waterway of some description i.e. a small brook or large river. This does not deter the mink from travelling across country however and coming into contact with livestock in farmyards. Foxes often in fact get blamed for the vast destruction that one of these creatures can cause in a poultry unit.