

Don't Blink! THERE'S A MINK!

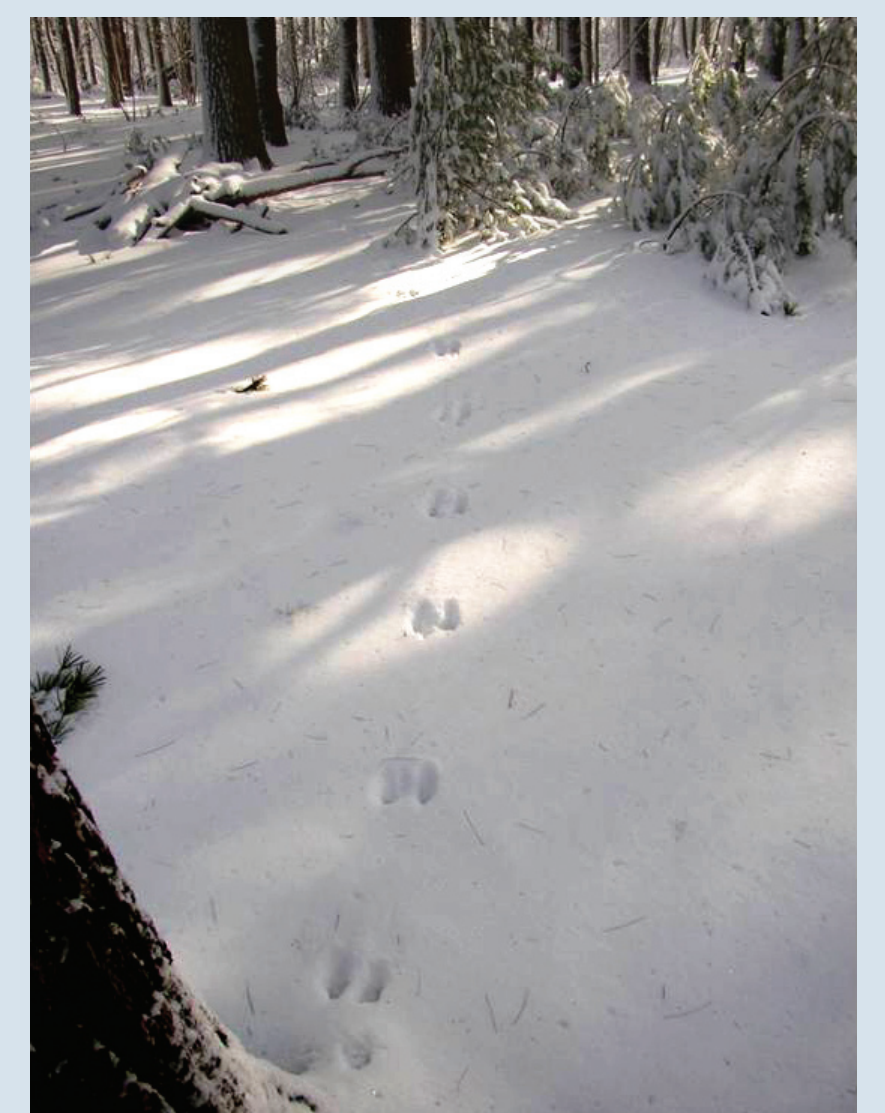
Out on a frosty hike, you pass a trickling stream that is frozen in places.
Wait! What was that rustle and flash of chocolate brown fur?
Could it be a mink?

Many are surprised to learn that mink are very common in New England. Mink like to live near streams, rivers and even small ponds where they create burrows in river banks or may use old beaver or muskrat dens. Strict carnivores, mink eat muskrat, fish, frogs, rabbits and other small animals. They are great swimmers, but are equally at home loping along in a wet meadow or wooded area.



American mink (*Neovison vison*) are weasels and have the characteristic long, skinny body with short legs and powerful jaws. They average about 2 to 4 pounds in weight. Their fur is dark chestnut to chocolate brown, and they sometimes have a white patch on their lips, chin or chest. Mink have a uniformly bushy tail rather than a slim tail, with a bushy tip like many weasels. All weasels produce a foul-smelling musk, and like their cousin the skunk, mink can spray a small amount of musk if threatened.

Winter is a good time to look for sign of mink as their tracks can often be seen in snow and mud around streams and riverbanks. They have partially webbed toes and leave tracks with a classic “bouncer” pattern. Their hind feet fall into the tracks of their front feet and the resulting pattern is that of leaping, paired tracks.



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