



Muskrat

Ondatra Zibethicus

- The muskrat, also known as a musquash or musk beaver, gets its name from the musky odor they give off.
- Muskrats are typically 16 to 25 inches long (including their 7 to 11-inch tail) and can weigh around 1.5 to 4 pounds.
- Muskrats are fantastic swimmers and can hold their breath underwater for up to 15 minutes.

Population: Historically, muskrats have played a significant role in Wisconsin's trapping and fur-bearing market. Today, muskrats are maintaining a high viable population throughout Wisconsin. Muskrats may be trapped during the limited season with a trapping license from the DNR.

Habits: Muskrats are nocturnal animals and are most active in the late afternoon and just before dusk. They are highly sociable animals and live in large, territorial families. Muskrats communicate and mark their territory with a secretion from their glands called musk.

Muskrats prefer to live in wetter areas such as marshes, swamps, and wetlands and build lodges out of cattails and surrounding vegetation. These lodges can often clog up waterways and can be seen as a nuisance to humans. If you happen to see a mound of vegetation floating on the water, you are most likely looking at a muskrat lodge.

Diet: Muskrats are omnivores but tend to prefer vegetation that grows along the water's edge such as cattails, reeds, arrowhead, and bulrushes. Muskrats can also be found eating fish, crustaceans, snails, and mussels.

Mating and Young: At the age of one, muskrats will usually mate in the spring and have on average two litters a year. After three to four weeks of gestation, the mother will give birth to a litter of three to eight kits in her nest. Muskrat kits grow up very quickly and after just thirty days can swim, dive, and feed themselves. Kits are considered fully grown by six weeks and will usually stay with the family unit.

Information from: <https://www.eekwi.org/animals/mammals/muskrat>, <https://www.uwsp.edu/biology/VertebrateCollection/Pages/Vertebrates/Mammals>, and <https://www.livescience.com/57668-muskrat-facts.html>

