

FIRST RECORD OF A LONG-TAILED WEASEL FROM THE TEXAS PANHANDLE -- The long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*) occurs throughout southern Canada and most of the United States (Svendsen 1982). Although the long-tailed weasel inhabits most life zones in temperate North America, it reportedly is absent from many arid and semi-arid areas (Hall 1951, Svendsen 1982). Texas is within the range of the long-tailed weasel, and it reportedly occurs throughout most of the state except for the Panhandle (Davis and Schmidly 1994), apparently due to the relative aridity of the region.

During 1998 to 2001, we interviewed three biologists that reported observations of long-tailed weasels in Dallam, Hartley, and Potter counties in the Texas Panhandle. Because these observations were farther north than the known range in Texas, we searched records from major museums for recent specimens from the Texas Panhandle (north of 35° latitude). Although we found no official specimens, a taxidermy mount of a “ferret” was located in the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, West Texas A&M University, Canyon, Texas.

This specimen (#1932/1) was a “masked” long-tailed weasel (*M. frenata neomexicanus*) based on pelage and body measurements taken from the mounted specimen (total length, 490 mm; tail, 155 mm; and hindfoot, 45 mm). The masked, or bridled, weasel is a subspecies that inhabits the southwestern United States (Hall 1981). This, and other southern subspecies, have a white band across the face, but otherwise pelage is similar to more northern subspecies. Our newly located specimen was collected during fall 1953 in Moore County, Texas, about 5 km northwest of Dumas. This location fills in the distributional gap of the species in Texas (Davis and Schmidly 1994), is approximately 160 km north of a previous record from Castro County (Jones et al. 1985), and makes it one of the most eastern specimens of *M. frenata neomexicanus* (Hall 1981).

Few *M. frenata neomexicanus* have been recorded for areas adjacent to the Texas Panhandle, which suggests that long-tailed weasels are rare in the region. Although specimens were reported for southwestern Kansas (Bee et al. 1981), only one was reported from the Oklahoma Panhandle (Caire et al. 1989), and none were reported from northeastern New Mexico (Findley et al. 1975).

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