

nature
Timothy Nowicki

Winter snow may not be the best thing to drive in, and hopefully we've seen it all, but it is great to have when identifying animal activity. No matter where an animal goes, it will leave tracks that can be followed. It is difficult if not impossible to recognize such extensive activity any other time of the year.

Tracks are left behind by all animals, common, and not so common — or at least not commonly seen. Recently, while walking the trails in a forest of aspen with some young invading hickories, I saw some tracks of the long-tailed weasel.

There are three species of weasel in Michigan. The short-tailed weasel, or ermine, is typically found in the upper peninsula and the northern half of the lower peninsula. A few counties from southern Michigan have reported them, but not many.

Least weasels, as their name implies, is the smallest of the three. They average about six inches in length. Males are typically larger than females. This species of weasel is found mostly in the southern half of the lower peninsula.

The tracks I saw were too big for least weasel but were the right size

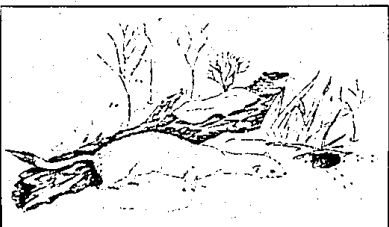
for the long-tailed weasel which is found throughout the southern half of the lower peninsula, in a few counties in the northern half and throughout most of the upper peninsula.

NOT ONLY is the track of a weasel easy to recognize, but the activity demonstrated by the tracks is characteristic of a hunter. I could see where the long, thin-bodied animal went down under fallen brush to investigate the hiding places of mice, one of their most common prey items.

After leaving one brush pile the tracks showed the characteristic narrow breadth of the paired paw impressions separated by about 16 inches.

I was fortunate to have seen its tracks as it hunted within a home range that may cover four to 50 acres depending on the availability of prey. If it was not for the snow on the ground I would not have had any idea that the weasel was ever there.

Tim Nowicki is a naturalist at Independence-Oaks County Park in Oakland County. He lives in Livonia.



TIM NOWICKI/ILLUSTRATION

The long-tailed weasel is found throughout the southern half of the lower peninsula, in a few counties in the northern half and throughout most of the upper peninsula.

Roll Call Report

Here's how Observer & Eccentric-area members of Congress were recorded on major roll call votes in the week ending March 8.

HOUSE

Aid to Israel — By a vote of 24 for and 397 against, the House rejected an amendment to strip a spending bill of \$650 million to help Israel repair the economic damage it suffered in the Persian Gulf war. The bill (H.R. 1282) appropriating \$4.3 billion for a variety of domestic and foreign programs this fiscal year was sent to the Senate with the money for Israel intact.

Sponsor Tim Valentine, D-N.C., said "the state of Israel needs to come to a time when it can stand alone."

Opponent Mickey Edwards, R-Okla., said the aid, recommended by the administration, was necessary to keep Israel secure.

A yes vote opposed sending war-related aid to Israel.

Voting no were Carl Pursell, R-Plymouth, Dennis Hertel, D-Harper Woods, William Ford, D-Taylor, Sander Levin, D-Southfield, and William Broomfield, R-Birmingham.

Public Housing — By a vote of 177 for and 240 against, the House rejected an amendment to H.R. 1281 (above) authorizing \$787 million for new approaches to public housing and programs for the homeless. The money was to have come from several other public housing programs. It was to have funded administration-backed initiatives enabling tenants to buy their units, block grants to states and cities to spur development of affordable housing, and rental aid and other services for the homeless.

Supporters said providing ownership opportunities would enable tenants to begin to break the poverty cycle, while many opponents said federal money for existing housing needs already is too scarce.

A yes vote was to fund the administration-backed housing and homeless initiatives.

Voting yes were Pursell and Broomfield. Voting no from Michi-

gan were Hertel, William Ford and Levin.

To Fund a War — By a vote of 380 for and 19 against, the House sent to the Senate a bill (H.R. 1282) appropriating \$42.6 billion for U.S. military costs of the Persian Gulf war. American taxpayers would provide up to \$15 billion with the remainder supplied by allies. To date, more than \$30 billion remains unpaid out of nearly \$44 billion pledged by allies to defray U.S. war costs.

In part, the bill earmarks \$7.9 billion for personnel costs, \$6.3 billion for combat costs estimated at more than \$150 million per day, and \$2.9 billion for weapons projects such as replenishing and upgrading "smart bombs" and Patriot and Tomahawk missile arsenals.

A yes vote supported gulf war appropriations.

Voting yes were Hertel, William Ford, Levin and Broomfield. Pursell did not vote.

SENATE

To Pay For S&L Bailout — By a vote of 69 for and 30 against, the Senate passed a bill (S. 419) authorizing \$30 billion in Treasury borrowing this fiscal year for the taxpayer bailout of failed savings-and-loans. This follows \$50 billion already made available for the salvage operation. The Resolution Trust Corp. would use the new money to close up to 200 thrifts. Companion legislation is due soon on the House floor.

Supporter Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., said Senators "have no choice" but to pass the bill because to do otherwise would renege on federal deposit insurance obligations "and risk a financial panic" of large proportions.

Opponent John Kerry, D-Mass., called it unfair "to have taxpayers in New England paying for a savings-and-loan crisis that is by and large concentrated in a few states not in the region."

A yes vote authorized \$30 billion to fund the S&L bailout until the end of the fiscal year.

Voting yes were Senators Carl Levin, D, and Donald Riegle, D.

Paying for the Bailout — By a

vote of 71 for and 28 against, the Senate tabled (killed) an amendment to S. 419 (above) requiring the Administration to recommend ways of financing the S&L bailout directly rather than by Treasury borrowing. The pay-as-you-go approach would incorporate the cost into the federal budget and likely require the Administration to ask Congress for higher taxes.

The amendment also sought to cut the new bailout authorization from \$30 billion to \$15 billion, on the rationale that the Resolution Trust Corp. will perform better if it must return frequently to Capitol Hill to seek funding.

A yes vote opposes the amendment.

Voting yes was Riegle. Levin voted no.

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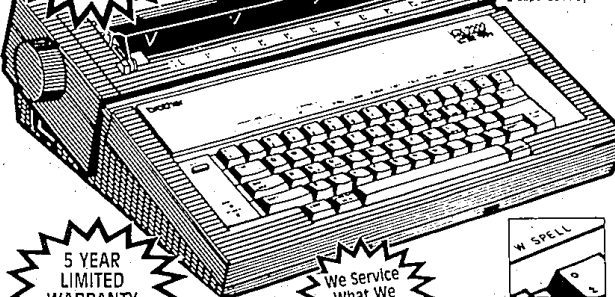
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