

## READING INTO LESSER BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RARE MUSTELIDS (EASTERN EUROPE)

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**ABSTRACT** – Many research and conservation efforts on rare mustelids in Eastern Europe, Russia and states of CIS are in progress. On a total of 640 publications examined, the otter (428) and the European mink (195) were the most studied species, the Steppe and Marbled polecats (89 and 83 entries), and Honey-badger (24) were less considered. Titles written in national languages dominate, but a recent increase in the ratio of publications written or summarized in English or German was noted. Based on number and profile of publications, it is suggested that conservation of European mink requires more efforts and research.

**Key words:** Bibliography, *Lutra lutra*, *Mustela lutreola*, *M. eversmanni*, *Vormela peregusna*, *Mellivora capensis*, Eastern Europe.

**RIASSUNTO** – *Bibliografia poco nota sui Mustelidi rari (Europa orientale)* – Nei paesi dell'Europa dell'Est, Russia e stati del CIS inclusi, le ricerche e le iniziative di conservazione riguardanti i mustelidi rari sono in progresso. Dall'esame di 640 pubblicazioni, *Lutra lutra* (428) e *Mustela lutreola* (195) sono le specie più studiate, mentre meno considerate sono *M. eversmanni* (89), *Vormela peregusna* (83) e *Mellivora capensis* (24). Buona parte dei lavori è in lingua originale, ma recentemente è in incremento il numero di pubblicazioni scritte o riassunte in inglese o tedesco. Sulla base del numero dei lavori e dei temi trattati, si evidenzia che la conservazione del visone europeo richiederebbe maggiori sforzi e ricerche.

**Parole chiave:** Bibliografia, *Lutra lutra*, *Mustela lutreola*, *M. eversmanni*, *Vormela peregusna*, *Mellivora capensis*, Europa dell'Est.

### INTRODUCTION

Much of what is being done on rare mustelids in so called Eastern Europe, Russia and states of CIS (hereafter EE & CIS) is still unknown to foreign researchers. There are two main reasons: language barrier and local character of many publications. Therefore the compilation of the "Lesser known bibliography of rare mustelids", so called by Romanowski (1993), can be useful as a source of general information on recent research and conservation efforts on these carnivores in EE & CIS. The aim is not to evaluate the results of research or conservation activities, but to illustrate amount of work being done in various fields on following species: Otter *Lutra lutra*, European mink *Mustela lutreola*, Steppe polecat *M. eversmanni*, Marbled polecat *Vormela peregusna*, and Honey-badger *Mellivora capensis*.

The bibliography includes all original papers from scientific journals, proceedings, books, popular articles, field guides, unpublished reports and game publications that provide any amount of information on rare mustelids, and were published since 1980.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Copies of bibliography or selections on species (areas) of interest are available from the author in the form of ASCII files.

## PUBLICATION NUMBERS AND SPECIES STUDIED

Up to January 15, 1993 the "Lesser known bibliography" consisted of 640 records of papers on rare mustelids. The majority of titles came from Russia, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland.

Papers published in scientific journals or newsletters, and books or book sections make up more than a half of bibliography (58%). The remaining part consists of popular articles and books (21%), abstracts or short papers published in proceedings (17%), and unpublished reports and thesis (4%).

The bibliography covers a period of 14 years, allowing for analysis of trend in numbers of published papers. The increasing tendency can be seen in the annual numbers of titles recorded in bibliography (Fig. 1). It has to be noted that articles recently published (especially those of local interest) may be underrepresented in this compilation. Nevertheless, the data illustrate a growing interest in rare mustelids in recent years.

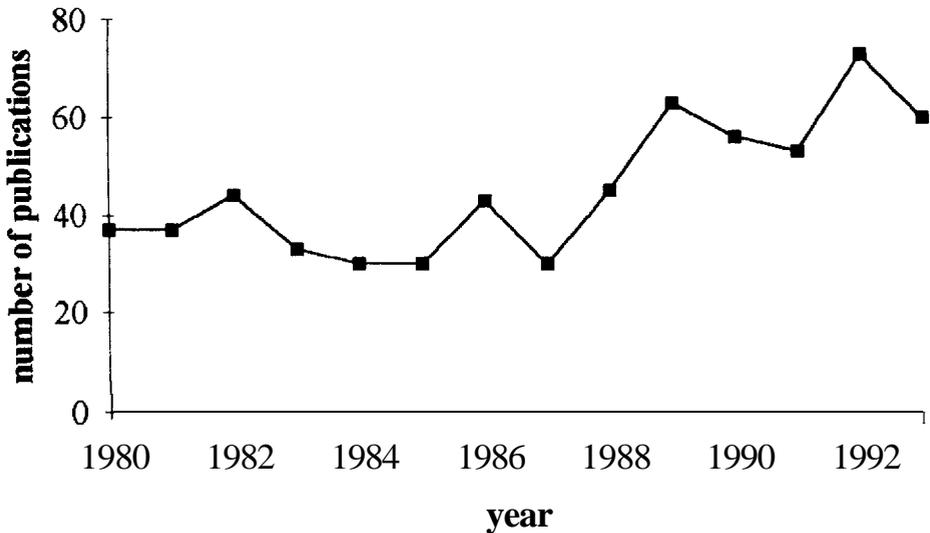


Fig. 1 – Annual numbers of publications on rare mustelids.

The otter was the most extensively covered species (428 publications) followed by European **mink** (195), Steppe and Marbled polecats (89 and 83 entries), and Honey-badger (24). Most of the research and conservation efforts are concentrated on the otter, considered as a symbol for habitat protection, and on the European mink - a very threatened species. It seems that there is a divergence of number of publications and the conservation priorities for the two species. Twice as many publications are devoted to otter - endangered only in part of its range, as to European mink, rated top priority in conservation in Palearctic Region (Schreiber et al., 1989). Very small number of publications (mostly of general character) on Honey-badger reflects little scientific interest for this mustelid.

## LANGUAGES

Bibliography of rare mustelids is dominated by titles written in national languages, with Russian being used most commonly (285 records). Only 21% of titles are presented in international languages: 104 in English, 30 in German and 3 in French. Additional 109 titles of those written in national languages include English, German or French summaries. This data show that about 60% of publications originating in EE & CIS can be used by foreign readers only with the help of translators. To make things worse, many titles were published in sources of limited circulation (for instance abstract books), that are hardly available abroad. This facts dramatically reduce the potential impact of research conducted in EE & CIS on international science. There are however optimistic signs of recent changes. Comparison of records from 1980-83 and 1990-93 shows an increase in ratio of publications written or summarized in English/German in 1990-93 ( $\chi^2=19.91$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Many of these papers appeared in journals or newsletters of wide circulation (e. g. IUCN/SSC Specialist groups bulletins), or were presented in international meetings. A new journal "Lutreola" was founded in 1993 to summarize in English investigations of mustelids in Russia. All these facts indicate that EE & CIS researchers undertake recently more efforts to bring their results in front of international audience.

## AREA OF INTEREST

The majority of titles is directly associated with conservation of rare mustelids. Almost seven out of every ten records can be classified into following single categories: conservation (26%), distribution (16%), ecology (15%), and status (13%). Background on conservation of these carnivores is provided by Red Data Books, that were prepared in most countries of concern. Rich data are presented on distribution and diet, while fewer studies describe habitat selection, space use and social organization of rare mustelids. Most field studies are based on the methods of scat analysis and registration of tracks in snow, and no telemetry was used so far. Some new study methods used in West Europe were incorporated by East Europe researchers recently: for example quantitative "British method" is being used to study otter distribution in Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland.

Significant amount of titles gives general description of species natural history, ecology and situation, often in popular form (10%). Results of investigations in genetics, systematic, morphology, immunology and parasitology are presented in 60 papers (10%). The remaining records are nature-oriented or connected with hunting (4%), devoted to breeding in zoos (1%), or present miscellaneous (historic, bibliographic etc.) information.

Thematic profiles of conservation-oriented publications on two species that attract most attention, otter and European mink, are shown (Fig. 2). The profile on otter reflects well balanced conservation and research activities. The profile on European mink shows scarce research into distribution and ecology. It has to be noted that large amount of conservation-oriented publications on this species is due to numerous articles that originate in the area, where the animal is already

extinct. In fact surprisingly few papers on European mink describe the real conservation measures. It is of great importance that further research on European mink is promoted in Russia - stronghold for the species.

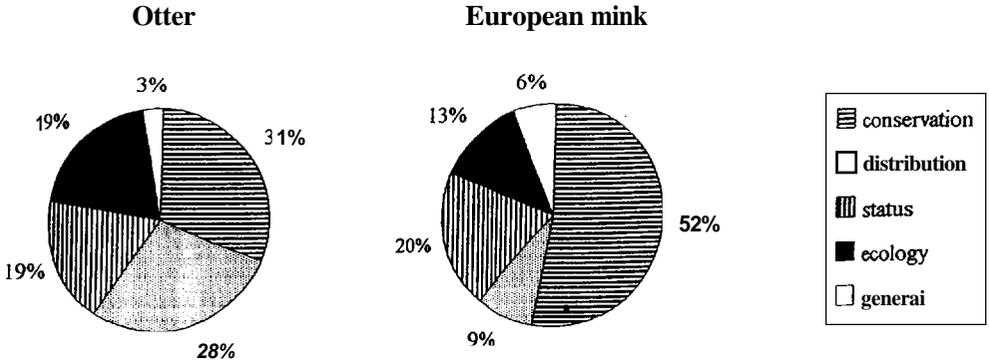


Fig. 2 – Thematic profiles of conservation-oriented publications on otter and European mink (papers published in scientific journals, newsletters, and books considered).

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