**FACTFILE**

**Number Living in the Wild:** Unknown

**IUCN Status:** Critically Endangered

**Scientific Name:** *Mustela lutreola*

**Weight:** Between 600–1,000 grams (g)

**Size:** Between 35–58 cm long

**Life Span:** Up to 12 years in captivity

**Habitat:** They are usually found within 100 m of fresh water, on the banks of rivers, streams and lakes.

**Diet:** Carnivore

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**Where Do They Live?**

A century ago, European minks lived throughout the continent. Now, they live in and around the waterways of parts of Spain, France and Eastern Europe.

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**Why Are They in Danger?**

Hunting is one of the main reasons European mink populations have decreased. Over the last century, European minks have been hunted for their valuable furs. Hunting has since been made illegal, but European mink numbers have never recovered. In the 1920s, the American mink species was introduced to the European mink's habitat. Because the two species eat the same food, the American mink has left the European mink with less food to eat and fewer habitats in which they can live.

**European Mink Populations have declined by 90% since the beginning of the 20th century.**

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**HOW ARE THEY BEING PROTECTED?**

In 1992, a conservation programme called European Mink EEP began with the aim of breeding European minks in captivity. There are currently around 250 members in captivity and conservationists hope to reintroduce many of these back into the wild. There are also conservation efforts underway in Estonia to home populations of European minks in new locations on the Estonian islands of Hiiumaa and Saaremaa in order to save the species from future extinction.