

Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*)

The muskrat is a small aquatic rodent with brown, silky fur and a narrow tail made of scales.¹ They are found near rivers, streams, and ponds and feed on aquatic vegetation, such as cattails (*Typha* spp.) and bulrush (e.g., *Schoenoplectus* spp.). They also use these types of vegetation, along with mud and sticks, to build shelters for raising young.¹ Muskrats are distributed throughout North America, including Canada and the United States, though not in parts of southwestern states or Florida.² They are considered to be “furbearers” and are sought after by hunters and trappers in the state of Wisconsin.¹

Current threats to muskrats are largely human-caused and primarily stem from people trapping them for their pelts.²

Status:³

IUCN Red List: Least Concern (LC)

Global: Secure (G5)

United States: Secure (N5)

United States Endangered Species Act: Not Listed

Wisconsin: Secure (S5)

Distribution in the Lower Green Bay and Fox River Area of Concern:⁴

Muskrats have been recently documented at Peter’s Marsh, Point au Sable, and the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay campus, though they likely occur in other parts of the Lower Green Bay and Fox River Area of Concern in appropriate habitat.

Links:

IUCN assessment information and population trends:

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15324/0>

WDNR overview and species description:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/furbearers.html>

Lower Green Bay and Fox River Area of Concern information:

<https://www.epa.gov/green-bay-fox-river-aoc>

¹ WDNR. “Wisconsin Furbearers” <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/furbearers.html> (February 2017).

² IUCN. “*Ondatra zibethicus*” <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15324/0> (February 2017).

³ NatureServe. NatureServe Explorer. “*Ondatra zibethicus* Muskrat”

http://explorer.natureserve.org/servlet/NatureServe?loadTemplate=tabular_report.wmt&paging=home&save=all&sourceTemplate=reviewMiddle.wmt (February 2017).

⁴ Latest LGB&FR AOC Biota Database file dated 6 February 2017.