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Manx Mammals



The range of mammal species present on the island is very different to that of our nearest neighbours.

Although several species of mammal are not present on the Isle of Man – fox, badger, otter, deer and moles are all absent – other species that are in decline in the UK are doing well in the Manx countryside.

Hares

Both the lowland Brown hare, and the upland Mountain or Blue hare are found on the island.

The brown hare is a relatively common sight, often found in hay fields and cattle grazed meadows, its long loping gait and tall ears with their distinctive black tips easily marking them out from the more common rabbits.

The brown hare's awkward walking gait transforms when the animal runs at speed – its long footed hind legs extending forward of its forelegs and giving it huge leverage and great speed over the ground.

The Mountain or Blue hare is by contrast smaller, with shorter ears and a more rounded shape. Its most distinctive characteristic is its white coat which it develops during the winter months.



These animals were originally native to the Isle of Man, becoming extinct at some point in the last thousand years or so. However in the 1950's a small population was re-introduced from Ireland and they have now spread successfully throughout most of the northern hills of the island. They are however not found south of the central valley.

At present their numbers are stable, but with our warm winter climate and lack of snow or frost, their winter white coat, rather than disguising them against a snowy white background, makes them stand out clearly in the heather uplands, making them easy prey for predators like polecats and birds of prey.

Polecats

The polecat itself is a species that was once native to the island, but was then lost before being re-introduced to the Isle of Man, it is believed some time in the 1600's. Now found through out the Island the population is actually derived from an escaped population of polecat-ferrets, so is not a true polecat as found in Wales. However these fierce little animals survive quite happily here and have established themselves as a successful breeding population.

Stoat

By contrast the only truly native member of the mustelids (weasel) family present on the Island, the Stoat, appears to be declining in numbers.

Smaller in size than a polecat, but larger than a weasel, the stoat is another aggressive little hunter in the open countryside.

Identification between stoats and weasels is not easy – made all the more confusing by the fact that here on the Isle of Man the stoat is often called “Weasel”. However, it can be distinguished from its smaller cousin by its larger ears (weasel's ears are very small as a proportion of the head size) and the black tip to its tail.

As with the mountain hare, stoats should moult in autumn to an all white coat (the true ermine coat) for improved camouflage in the winters snow but here on the Isle of Man the stoats retain a dark brown winter coat, in the same way as the Irish race of stoats.

Recent records of this animal have been scarce and it is believed that they may be on the decline – so if you are lucky enough to spot one, please [report it to the Manx Wildlife Trust](#) or [Manx National Heritage](#).

Hedgehog

The common hedgehog is also found throughout the Island – again a species that is not native to our island but has been introduced here at some time in the past.



Wallabies

But most intriguing of all the 'imports' running wild are the wallabies that frequent the northern plain, especially the Ballaugh area. You might be lucky to spot one at our [Close Sartfield nature reserve](#).



Mountain goats

European mountain goats are not native to the British Isles, yet a small population that escaped from a private collection have made successful use of the steep cliff sides and dramatic terrain of the coastal strip north of Laxey, near Dhoon Glen and Bulgham Bay.

Their numbers have grown steadily over the years, and are now so numerous that an observant spotter can get good views of them clinging to their precarious cliff ledges as he or she rides the Manx Electric Railway from Douglas to Ramsey.

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