On the occurrence of the Weasel, *Mustela nivalis*, in Turkey

by Max Kasparek

Abstract: It was shown that the Weasel is distributed over the whole of Anatolia. The species' considerable size, the occasional occurrence of a white winter coat and the existence of two types of Weasels (*nivalis* type and *minuta* type) in Turkey have often lead to the wrong assumption that the Stoat (*M. erminea*) also occurs in Turkey.

Kurzfassung: Das Mauswiesel ist, wie eine Zusammenstellung publizierter und unpublizierter Nachweise zeigt, über die gesamte Türkei verbreitet. Die beträchtliche Größe, das gelegentliche Auftreten von weißem Winterfell und die Existenz von zwei Morphen (*nivalis*-Typ und *minuta*-Typ) hat oft zu der fälschlichen Annahme geführt, auch das Hermelin, *Mustela erminea*, würde in der Türkei vorkommen.

Key words: Mustelidae – zoogeography – Turkey – distribution

1. Introduction

KUMERLOEVE (1975) raised the question of whether the Weasel is distributed over the whole Anatolia, as had been stated by NEU (1937). In fact, KUMERLOEVE'S literature review did not reveal many records, so that his view seemed to be justified. Some new records and others found in the mammalogical and non-mammalogical literature are listed here in order to define the range of this species. The question of whether the Stoat (*Mustela erminea*) occurs in Turkey will also be discussed.

2. Records

The records are arranged from the west to the east. If available, the year of the observation is added after the location.

2.1. Literature records

Güllübahçe, the ancient Priene (37.43/27.22), 1911: WEIGOLD (1913). • Söke (37.55/27.25), 1964: BOESSNECK & SCHÄFFER (1986). • Bayramdere north of Karacabey (40.22/28.23), 1971: ANONYMOUS (1971). • southern shore of Bafa Gölü (37.28/27.28), 1986 and 1987: KASPAREK (1988). • İstanbul and Bosphorus (41.05/29.00): SCHLERFF in: KUMERLOEVE (1967). • İznik Gölü (40.25/29.30), 1964: KUMERLOEVE (1967). • Acıgöl (= "Çardak Gölü") (37.49/29.43), 1964: KUMERLOEVE (1967). • Yeniçağa Gölü (40.47/32.01), 1984: KILIÇ & KASPAREK (1987). • Çerkeş (40.49/32.54): ÇALIŞKAN (1983). • Ankara (39.57/32.52), 1917/18: KOEHLER (1924), cf. also BOESSNECK (1974). • Kastamonu (41.22/33.51): BOESSNECK (1974). • Anaşa, apparently identical with Pozantı (37.25/34.54), 1875/76: DANFORD & ALSTON (1877). • Ovaçiftlik in the Sultan Marshes (38.14/35.12), 1979, 1980 and 1982: KASPAREK (1985). • Erciyas Dağı (38.32/35.32), 1973: BOESSNECK (1974). • Balık Gölü in the Kızılırmak Delta (41.33/36.04), 1984: DIJKSEN & KASPAREK (1985). • Antakya

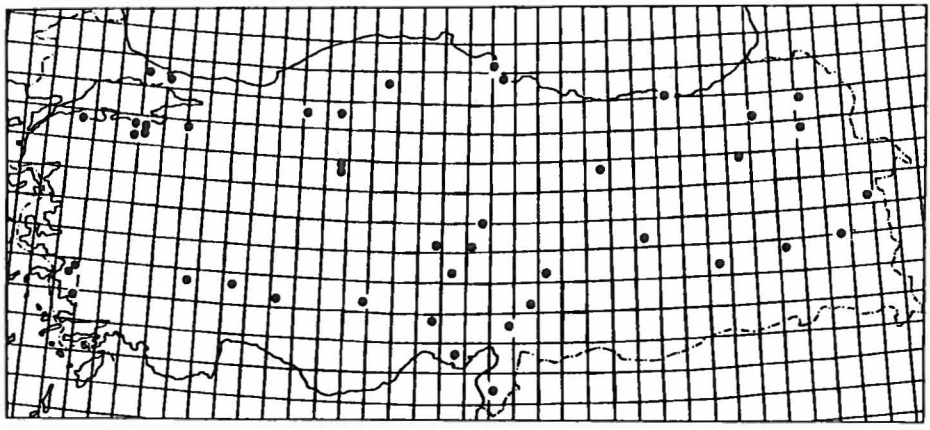

Fig. 1. Distribution map of the Weasel, *Mustela nivalis*, in Turkey.

(36.12/36.08), 1881: CHANTRÉ (1883). • Samsun area (41.17/36.20), 1960s: KUMERLOEVE (1967). • Haruniye (37.16/36.28), 1953: KUMERLOEVE (1967). • Kahramanmaraş (37.36/36.55), 1950s: KUMERLOEVE (1967). • Elazığ (38.41/39.13), 1971: KOCH, MALEC & STORCH (in: KUMERLOEVE 1975). • Trabzon (41.00/39.43), 1905/06: ROBERT (in: KUMERLOEVE 1967). • Hazro ("Hazu") near Silvan, Diyarbakır (38.16/40.48), 1881: CHANTRÉ (1883). • Erzurum (39.55/41.17): NIETHAMMER (1973). • Bitlis (38.24/42.06), 1881: CHANTRÉ (1883). • Göle near Kars (40.48/42.36): KUMERLOEVE (1967). • Sarıkamış (40.21/42.34): KUMERLOEVE (1967). • Van (38.30/43.23): NIETHAMMER (1973).

2.2. New records

Near Karabiga (40.23/27.13), 1988: KASPAREK. • Söke (37.55/27.25), 1968: leg. ROKITANSKY, coll. Naturhistorisches Museum Wien. • between Mustafakemalpaşa and Apolyont Gölü (40.06/28.28), 1986: KILIÇ & KASPAREK. • south of Terkos Gölü (41.17/28.37), 1988: KASPAREK. • Issız Han on the northern shore of Apolyont (= Uluabat) Gölü (40.13/28.32), 1986: KILIÇ & KASPAREK. • Arapçiftliği Gölü north of Karacabey (40.22/28.31), 1974: KOCH. • between Eğirdir and İsparta (37.52/30.43), 1985: GRIMMER & SCHOLL. • southern shore of Beyşehir Gölü (37.39/31.38), 1987: I. & R. KINZELBACH. • Mogan Gölü (39.47/32.53), 1981: BEZZEL. • Hotamış Gölü (37.39/33.20), 1985: HANSEN & SKOV. • Ürgüp (38.38/34.55), 1979: V. D. VEN. • 22 km NE of Tuzla, Çukurova (36.49/35.17), 1982: N. HOPPE et al. • Tuzla Gölü (39.00/35.48), 1988: VAN DEN BERK. • Elbistan (38.12/37.11), 1987: V. WINDEN. • Ortaköy at Kızıldağ near Refahiye (39.54/38.22), 1982: KILIÇ & KASPAREK. • Çamlıyamaç Köyü near Tortum Gölü (40.37/41.32), 1988: DIJKSEN et al. • Çaldıran (39.08/43.55), 1988: HAASS.

3. Discussion

The suggestion of NEU (1937) that the Weasel is distributed over the whole of Anatolia has proved to be correct. Although there are still not enough records to give a complete picture, their distribution shows a wide range. The records of the Weasel in Turkey extend from sea level to over 2,500 m altitude. Compared with Central European Weasels, Turkish animals are extremely large. The size of this species seems to be correlated with temperature (NIETHAMMER 1973).

In Turkey, Weasels sometimes have a white wintercoat. Records of white Weasels are from Pozantı in the Taurus mountains (about 1,220 m), Van (about 1,730 m) and from Erzurum (about 1,850 m). The change of colouration in winter seems to occur only at higher altitudes, and lowland populations seem to keep their brown colouration throughout the whole year (cf. NIETHAMMER 1973).

These two facts, the considerable size and the appearance of white Weasels, have sometimes given rise to the view that the Stoat *(Mustela erminea)* occurs in Turkey (e.g. NEU 1937, TURAN 1984). However, the range of the Stoat does not extend outside south-east Europe. Both species, the Weasel and the Stoat, are also listed in the Turkish hunting law (MERKEZ AV KOMISYONU 1987). According to this, the hunting season is open from August to December, for instance in 1986 from 16.8 to 28.12 (the period varies a little from year to year).

In Turkey, two types of Weasel are found: The *nivalis* colour pattern with a zig-zag-shaped line on the sides, a cheek spot and almost completely brown front paws, and the *minuta* colour pattern with a smooth line on the sides, no cheek spot, with white front paws and partly white hind paws, and smaller size. As a rule, *minuta* type Weasels become white in winter, but not the *nivalis* type animals (NIETHAMMER 1973). Of four specimens collected at Trabzon, three are of *nivalis* and one of *minuta* pattern. Both types thus live sympatrically. The individual from Apolyont Gölü belonged to the *nivalis* type (KASPAREK), that from Erciyas Dağı, from Elbistan and one specimen from Ankara to the *minuta* type (BOESSNECK 1974, v. WINDEN unpubl.). Further studies including field observations should concentrate on the distribution of both types of Weasel in Turkey. This might also contribute to the question of whether North Anatolian Weasels are generally smaller in size (BOESSNECK 1974) or whether there is an unequal distribution of *minuta* and *nivalis* types.

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