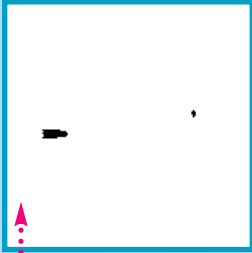


Silver Stoats

The two animals on display here are stoats, *Mustela erminea*. One has its winter coat on and one its summer coat - can you guess which?

In very cold countries the stoat will turn completely white (apart from



Stoat in a snowstorm



A stoat in its winter coat



Stoat Coats

Stoat pelts, especially the white ones, were once thought very beautiful and often made into scarves and capes. The black tips of the animals' tails would decorate the white fur. These ermine coats has been prized for centuries in Europe for state robes - in the reign of Edward III only royalty were allowed to wear white ermine in England.

Ermine has decorated kings and queens for centuries



Look at the Stoats' Teeth

Stoats are voracious carnivores hunting rabbits, voles, birds and frogs along ditches, hedgerows and walls. They will grab larger prey by the throat and have been known to kill whole coops of chickens in one go. They are thorough and curious hunters and, some say, if you stand still and such hard on the back of your hand, sounding like a rabbit in distress, you can attract a stoat.