On Stone, by Wm. E. Hill, 1874

Bridled Neotoma.

Drawn from Nature by J. J. Audubon, F.R.S.E., F.L.S.

Lith. Printed & Col'd by J. T. Bowen, Philad^a

PUTORIUS FRENATA.—LIGHT.

BRIDLED WEASEL.

PLATE LX.—MALES.

P. magnitudine P. ermineæ, supra fulvus, infra ex flavicante albus ; naso, dorso, majore capitis parte, auribusque nigris ; macula inter aures et vitta frontali albis.

CHARACTERS.

Size of the ermine ; nose, back part of the head, and ears, black ; a white spot between the ears, and a band over the forehead, white ; yellowish-brown above, yellowish-white beneath.

SYNONYME.

MUSTELA FRENATA, Lichtenstein. Darstellung neuer oder wenig bekannter Säugethiere XLII., Tafel. Berlin, 1827-1834.

DESCRIPTION.

This species in form bears a considerable resemblance to the Ermine of the more northern parts of America. It is however rather stouter, the neck shorter, the ears narrower and higher, and the tail a little longer. In its dentition it is also similar to the common weasel, being a true *putorius*, with thirty-four teeth, having only four molars on each side of the upper jaw, and five beneath, whilst the genus *Mustela* is characterized by having thirty-eight teeth, five on each side of the upper jaw, and six beneath. The ears and tail are clothed with hair, the fur is a little shorter and slightly coarser than that of the Ermine.

COLOUR.

Moustaches, ears on both surfaces, nose, and around the eyes, black ; a broad band of white rises in the forehead above the nose, extending around the head between the eyes and ears, reaching the neck and throat including the chin, the colours of which as well as the inner surfaces of the fore-legs are white ; there is also a white spot on the back of the head between the ears. The colour is dark brownish black from the

neck, reaching the white band on the forehead, where the lines of separation are distinctly but irregularly preserved. On the under surface from the chest to the tail including the inner surface of the thighs, a light fawn colour; tail, the colour of the back till within an inch of the tip, where it gradually darkens into black. The black at the end of the tail is not only shorter but less distinct than the corresponding parts on the ermine in summer colour.

The colour of the back and outer surfaces of the legs is light yellowish brown, gradually darkening on the neck till it reaches and blends with the dark brown colours on the hind head.

DIMENSIONS.

							Inches.
From point of nose to root of tail,	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
Tail (vertebræ),	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Do. to end of hair,	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Height of ear,	-	-	-	-	-	-	0 $\frac{1}{2}$
Breadth of skull,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 $\frac{1}{8}$
From heel to end of longest nail,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 $\frac{6}{8}$

HABITS.

We have personally no knowledge of the habits of this rare and comparatively new species. The specimen from which Dr. LICHTENSTEIN made his description and figure, was obtained by F. DEPPE, Esq., in the vicinity of the city of Mexico, where the animal was indiscriminately called *Comadreja*, *Oronzito* and *Onzito*. He was unable to collect any information in regard to its habits. The specimen from which our description and figure were made, was captured by Mr. JOHN K. TOWNSEND. We conversed with an American officer, who informed us that he had occasionally seen it near Monterey in Mexico, that it there bore no better character than its congener the Ermine in the more northern parts of America; that it was destructive to poultry and eggs, and very commonly took up its residence in the outhouses on plantations, and under such circumstances was regarded as a great nuisance. Fortunately for them, the species was considered as quite rare in the northern parts of Mexico, as the Mexican who pointed out this animal to our officer stated, this was the first *Comadreja* he had seen in five years.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

As we have not heard of the existence of our Ermine in Mexico, we are inclined to the belief that this species takes the place of the

Ermine in the South, and that with similar roving and predacious habits it has a more extended geographical range than is at present known. The field of natural history in Texas, California, and Mexico, has been as yet very imperfectly explored. We have only heard of the Bridled Weasel as being found in four widely separated localities—in Texas between the Colorado and Rio Grande, in Mexico in the vicinity of the capital, and in the northern parts near Monterey, and in the valleys of the mountains south-west of that city.

GENERAL REMARKS.

In comparing this singularly marked species with others from the Eastern and Western hemispheres, we have been struck with the uniformity existing on both continents in the nearly equal distribution of predacious animals, and in their close resemblance to each other, in size, form and habits. The badger in Europe (*Meles vulgaris*) is in America replaced by *M. Labradoria*. The European Otter (*Lutra vulgaris*) has its representative in America in our Canada otter (*Lutra Canadensis*). The European mink (*P. lutreola*) is replaced by our nearly similar (*P. vison*). The European ferret (*P. furo*) by our western black-footed ferret (*P. nigripes*). The ermine and common weasel of the north of Europe (*P. erminea*) and (*P. vulgaris*) by our ermine and brown weasel (*P. erminea*) and (*P. fusca*) in the Northern and Middle States of America, and the Java ferret (*P. nudipes*) has its representative near the tropics in America in our (*P. frenata*), nearly of the same size, and with similar habits. There is evidently great wisdom in this arrangement of Providence. Countries under similar latitudes producing large numbers of the smaller rodentia, require a certain number of carnivorous animals to prevent their too rapid multiplication, which in the absence of such a provision of nature would be destructive of the interests of the husbandman.

Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1851. "Putorius frenata, Bridled Weasel [Pl. LX, males]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 2, 71–73.

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