

Alaska's Wild Wonders - A Mustelid Mystery (2023)

Vocabulary list

Aquatic – an animal or plant growing or living in or near water.

Blubber – a thick layer of fat directly under the skin of all marine mammals.

Bound (gait) – a gait where an animal uses its rear feet to propel itself forward through the air, catching or landing the fall from the air with front feet.

Burrow – a tunnel or hole that an animal digs as a place to live, for temporary shelter or protection, or due to movement from one place to another (i.e., creating a tunnel through snow).

Camouflage – a defense or tactic that an organism uses to disguise their appearance, usually to blend in with their surroundings.

Carnivorous – an animal that eats other animals, or a meat-eater.

Fur – a thick growth of hair that covers the skin of almost all mammals.

Gait – the pattern of movement of the limbs of animals during locomotion over a solid surface, usually described by a sequence of tracks or footfalls.

Guard hairs – longer, coarse hairs that give a mammal color and protect the underfur by shielding it from abrasion and shedding water.

Habitat – the place where an animal lives that provides food, water, shelter (or cover), and space in a suitable arrangement that an organism needs to survive.

Hind (limbs/feet) – the back limbs and feet of an animal with four or more legs.

Insulation – anything that reduces the movement of heat energy into or out of a particular object or area.

Kit – a young fur-bearing animal

Lope (gait) – A faster gait than a trot where an animal uses its hind legs to propel itself forward, so that the hind legs are a unit, and the front legs are a separate unit.

Mustelid (family Mustelidae) – a member of the large, widely distributed, diverse family of Mustelidae; mustelids are mostly carnivorous mammals that have short legs, a long body, and thick fur. Mustelids include otters, mink, marten, weasels, wolverines, and fishers in Alaska.

Omnivore – a living thing that eats both plants and other animals.

Semi-aquatic – an animal or plant living partly on land and partly in water.

Sensory perception – the use of any of the available senses an organism possesses to gain a better understanding of the world.

Stride length – the linear (straight line) distance between two successive steps of the same foot. It can also mean the distance between sets of four tracks, in the case of bounding and loping.

Subnivean zone – the opening between the ground and snow cover where small mammals live during winter, which they make for travel, to hunt prey, and to gather plant material.

Tracks – an imprint left behind in soil, snow, mud, or other ground surface made by an animal moving across it.

Track size – length and width of a track left by an animal.

Underfur – shorter, finer, and denser hairs than guard hairs, responsible for almost all the warmth and insulation that mammals get from their fur.

Walk (gait) – A slow gait in which each limb of an animal moves independently with no loss of contact with the ground at any point while stepping forth.

Webbed (feet) – a specialized foot with skin between the toes that helps an animal swim.