

# GETTING TO KNOW WILDLIFE

## FAST MOVING MINK



By Kate MacNeil,

Education Coordinator,  
Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife  
Centre – [www.wildlifeinfo.ca](http://www.wildlifeinfo.ca)

During the years we did wildlife rehabilitation we would care for a wide range of species each season. Although we would occasionally see adult mink, we would not often get orphaned young. In June of 2000 this changed.

A 4 week old little female arrived at the Centre and like many other young animals she was weak and lethargic. She was very dehydrated and had a few fleas and ticks but otherwise seemed okay. We gave sub-Q fluids and within two days she was moving at lightning speed.

Mink are members of the weasel family, an adult weights around 1.5-3 lbs. Their diet consists of rodents, frogs, fish and birds. With a diet like

that, it was not surprising that our new friend had sharp, tiny white teeth. She would happily bite and lick at the feeding syringe as if she had not eaten for days. Although she loved to eat her formula, she was not a fan of getting her face washed afterwards and she would make all kinds of squeaking noises. She sounded like a toy.

Soon it was time for her to move to a large cage in the library. We placed a variety of toys, sticks and plastic tubing in her cage to keep her busy, and boy did it work. She did not stop! One of her favourite moves was swinging like Tarzan on the stuffed toys hanging in her cage. Her other favourite manoeuvre was the fireman roll. She would knock a stick so it was on a 45 degree angle. She would then climb up the cage, jump onto the top of the stick, roll herself into a ring like a donut and

slide down.

I had read years before that weasels moved like water flowing over rocks and that trying to catch one was like trying to catch mercury. I am old enough to remember breaking the glass thermometer and catching the mercury between two pieces of paper. Catching this little mink was indeed like trying to catch mercury, or pin Jell-O to the wall! A big part is the agility that many members of the weasel family demonstrate. We would catch her to weigh her and give her cage a thorough cleaning and staff would emerge sweating and smelling from the squirt of musk they received.

For the rest of the summer we enjoyed her impressive acrobatic routines and when she was released back into the wild she bounded away with the energy and curiosity she normally demonstrated.

0901.362387