

# Muskrat

*Ondatra zibethicus*

Family: **Cricetidae**

Omnivore / prey

Native to Virginia



The muskrat is a relative of the otter and beaver, and behaves in much the same way. These mostly aquatic rodents are most active at night, especially in the late evening and early morning hours. They are omnivorous and feed on cattails, mussels, frogs, crayfish, and small turtles. They are also prey to minks, foxes, coyotes, bears, eagles, and snakes. Muskrats live in primarily two types of nests: a push up or a den. A den is often dug into the bank of a river or stream and has an underwater entrance, while a push-up is built in a marsh and mainly consists of mud and vegetation.

## Fun Facts

- Muskrats build feeding platforms in wetlands that allow them to eat without worrying about the threat from predators.
- They also help to maintain open areas in marshes, providing key habitat for waterfowl.
- Muskrat fur is very warm and is highly valued, especially in northern North America and Europe.
- Aquatic plants make up 95% of their diet.
- The muskrat can chew its food underwater.
- Muskrats are very good swimmers and can stay underwater for up to 15 minutes.