

Was It A Ferret Or Not?

Was a ferretlike animal that got into someone's house really a ferret?

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Q: We live in a home in the country. Somehow a ferretlike creature found its way into our living room. He/she was running around the perimeter of the room, under couches, etc. It was not aggressive. We finally got it out of the room via a window we opened. He was basically white, with black feet, a black tip on his long, thin tail, and a strip of black going from his nose and over his back (a reverse skunk color!). He was quite long, we're guessing 13 or 14 inches including tail, and thin. Was our little visitor a ferret, a weasel or something else?

A: The least weasel, long-tailed weasel, stoat, and ermine are native to North America. Animals of these species that live in higher altitudes often turn white in the winter. Your description of it having a long white body with a black tip on its tail certainly sounds like it could have been a long-tailed weasel or an ermine; without seeing a picture and the location, it is difficult to guess.

The size and shape you describe could also suit a ferret, but the color is slightly unusual (not unheard of). In most instances, ferrets will not survive for long outside, so my guess is that your visitor was not a ferret.

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