

Egyptian weasels in urban Alexandria

Nayer Youakim



Although previously considered a separate species, the **Egyptian weasel** (*Mustela [nivalis] subpalmata*) is more likely a subspecies of the least weasel. Unusually, they are considered a pest species, and in some urban settings within the Nile Delta their population is booming.

I visit Alexandria, in Egypt – my birth city – at least once a year and have seen plenty of weasels over the years. Earlier this year I discovered a thriving population with better views than ever before and I even managed a couple of photos for the first time – indeed, photographing a weasel was the main wild animal target of my eight-day trip in January 2019.

After days of random glimpses of weasels, despite the daylight, rowdy people and stray animals, I found that the area around Kafr Abdo in Alexandria (the source of many of my previous sightings) came alive with weasels in the quiet moments around 1-3am in the winter. Many weasels could be seen running across the streets, along walls, under cars and in the open, with a frenzy of activity lasting a few minutes, interrupted only by a stray dog, cat or car driving past. After two minutes of silence, the frenzy would resume. At one point I counted twelve different animals.

I found that the best photographic opportunities came occasionally when a weasel would run across a high wall and stop to look over. I got a very lucky photo when waiting for a weasel to pass between two cars – it ran through the shot just as I was checking my flash.

I imagine that this level of activity should exist at different times of year too, and in more places throughout the Nile Delta and in Cairo, but there's limited documented information available.

I can give exact locations by email to those who are genuinely interested – I would advise caution to photography in this area at night, especially when nearing police stations, government and consular buildings. These may be less obvious than you might expect.



Thanks to David Howlett for initially encouraging me to try and photograph the weasels.