A NEW WEASEL FROM THE LOWER PLEISTOCENE OF IDAHO

Claude W. Hibbard

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By Claude W. Hibbard

This is one of a series of papers on the later Cenozoic fossils from the Snake River Valley area in cooperation with Dwight W. Taylor, of the United States Geological Survey. Taylor has found numerous remains of small vertebrates associated with mollusk shells in the area under study. Among the fossil mammal remains is the lower jaw of an extinct weasel which is described as new.

Mustela gazini sp. nov.
(Figs. 1A–B)


Horizon and type locality.—Lower Pleistocene (Aftonian?) Hagerman formation; Hagerman local fauna. Locality No. 540 D.W.T., Hagerman quadrangle, SW1/4 Sec. 28, T. 7 S, R. 13 E, 2,100 feet north and 300 to 400 feet east of southwest corner; elevation 3,025 feet; Twin Falls County, Idaho.

Diagnosis.—A weasel the size of a male Mustela frenata nevadensis Hall. It is distinguished from Mustela frenata by a lesser transverse width of the heel of P4 and P3. The principal cusp of P4 and P3 of the fossil form is more centrally located than in M. frenata. The anterior part of P4 and P3 of Mustela gazini is not as reduced as in the Recent weasels.

Description of holotype.—The distance from the posterior border of the canine alveolus to posterior border of the alveolus of Mz is 13.8 mm. The anteroposterior length of P3–Mz is 11.6 mm. P2 had two well-developed roots. P3 resembles P4 in shape but is smaller (Fig. 1B). The principal cusp of P3 is located more posteriorly than in Mustela frenata. In the Recent species it is located more anteriorly and is almost directly over the anterior root of P3. The heel of P4 is not expanded transversely where it leaves the base of the cusp. The lingual basin (valley) separating the paraconid and protoconid blades is deeper than in M. frenata. The carnassial notch of M1 is closed. The anteroposterior length of M1 is 5.75 mm. The greatest transverse width of M1 is

Fig. 1.—A and B, Mustela gazini sp. nov. (A) Occlusal view of LP3 – Mz, holotype; (B) lateral view of left lower jaw, holotype, U.S.N.M., No. 21824. C and D, Mustela rexroudensis. (C) Occlusal view of LP3 – Mz; (D) lateral view of left lower jaw, topotype, U.M.M.P., No. 30243. All × 2. Drawn by Michael O. Woodburne.
2.1 mm. The greatest transverse width of $M_2$ is 1.0 mm. This species is named for C. Lewis Gazin.

*Remarks.*—*Mustela gazini* is distinguished from *M. rexroadensis* Hibbard (Fig. 1C–D) by its larger size and by the better developed anterior base of both $P_3$ and $P_4$. The carnassial notch is not as tightly closed in *M. rexroadensis*. For a list of the Hagerman fauna see C. Lewis Gazin, Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus., 83(2985):285, 1936.

Remains of *Mimomys (Cosomys) primus* (Wilson), *Pliopotamys minor* (Wilson) and *Blarina gidleyi* Gazin, were found in association with the weasel jaw.

*Museum of Paleontology, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Received May 17, 1957.*