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A NEW WEASEL FROM THE LOWER PLEISTOCENE OF IDAHO

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A NEW WEASEL FROM THE LOWER PLEISTOCENE OF IDAHO

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. 1*A–B*)

Holotype.—No. 21824, U.S. National Museum, part of a left lower jaw bearing P_3–M_2, alveoli of P_2 and the alveolus of the canine. Collected in the summer of 1955 by Dwight W. Taylor of the U.S. Geological Survey.

Horizon and type locality.—Lower Pleistocene (Aftonian?) Hagerman formation; Hagerman local fauna. Locality No. 540 D.W.T., Hagerman quadrangle, SW¼ 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 P_4 and P_3. The principal cusp of P_4 and P_3 of the fossil form is more centrally located than in *M. frenata.* The anterior part of P_4 and P_3 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 M_2 is 13.8 mm. The anteroposterior length of P_3–M_2 is 11.6 mm. P_2 had two well-developed roots. P_3 resembles P_4 in shape but is smaller (Fig. 1*B*). The principal cusp of P_3 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 P_3. The heel of P_4 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 M_1 is closed. The anteroposterior length of M_1 is 5.75 mm. The greatest transverse width of M_1 is

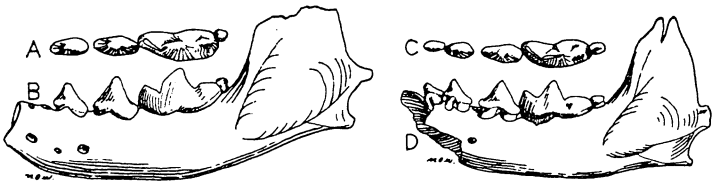

Fig. 1.—*A* and *B, Mustela gazini* sp. nov. (*A*) Occlusal view of LP_3 – M_2, holotype; (*B*) lateral view of left lower jaw, holotype, U.S.N.M., No. 21824. *C* and *D, Mustela rexroadensis.* (*C*) Occlusal view of LP_2 – M_2; (*D*) lateral view of left lower jaw, topotype, U.M.M.P., No. 30243. All × 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. 1*C–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.