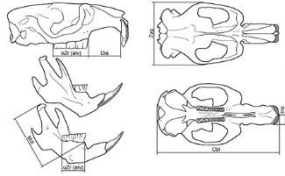


Population analyses of muskrat in Germany

Rapid expansion despite low diversity?



Measurements at the muskrat skull © Tabea Luise Kleiner, Maike Halime



Lower tooth row of the muskrat. © Thorsten Adam

In 1905, the muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), which was originally only found in the Neo-Arctic, was released in Bohemia. Today it colonises almost all areas of Europe. The muskrat digs tunnels in banks and dykes. This reduces their stability and therefore the muskrat is combated regionally. These countermeasures have led to a decline in population sizes in Saxony, for example. Despite the low genetic diversity and the sometimes intensive control measures, the muskrat expanded in Europe and established itself in almost all suitable regions. Neither inbreeding nor anthropogenic influences appear to have a major impact on the survival of the muskrat populations. The Senckenberg Museum of Natural History Görlitz has around 2000 specimens (skulls, tissue samples) from the last few decades of muskrats from Lusatia and Lower Saxony available as a basis for population analyses. Among other things, the skulls are analysed craniometrically and epigenetically. Metric and non-metric methods will also be applied by using the teeth. Age, sex and reproductive data will also be recorded and determined. The results are expected to provide answers on the dispersal success and status of the muskrat in Germany.