

You Little Weasel!

What comes to your mind when you hear someone called a weasel? Do you think of someone who is sneaky and dishonest? Writers often use the term “weasel” to mean a corrupt, greedy scoundrel. Or worse, to refer to someone who kills with deadly efficiency for no reason whatsoever.

Weasels are skinny, squirmy, stinky, but oh so cool. These amazing animals are not the devious little villains that the press makes them out to be.

To be sure, some of the weasels' reputation is earned. They truly are fierce and efficient killers, but they kill to survive. Weasels

rest only a few hours daily. They need a lot of food to fuel their slender bodies. Most of their day is spent hunting. They must get their fill of mice, chipmunks, and other small animals—eating 40 percent or more of their body weight! When small animals are scarce, weasels boldly attack animals several times their own size.

Speed, ferocity, and the ability to fit into tight spaces help the weasel to find food, and also to protect themselves from predators. Bobcats, hawks, coyotes and owls are some of the weasels' natural enemies. The weasel also benefits both as the hunter and as the hunted from its seasonal color change. In winter they have a thick white coat which blends in perfectly with the snow. In the summertime, weasels' brown fur provides similar natural camouflage. When weasels are cornered, these cousins to the skunk can also emit a foul odor to ward off all but the most aggressive attackers.

So the next time someone calls you a weasel, take it as a compliment!

