Weasel

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern

There are two weasel species in Gorongosa: striped weasel (*Poecilogale albinucha*) and zorilla (*Ictonyx striatus*). The striped weasel is a small weasel with a long, sinuous body, very short limbs, and a long tail. They have black fur with a yellowish-white patch on the top of their head that splits into white stripes that run the length of their back and join again at their tail, which is all yellowish-white.

A skunklike mustelid, the zorilla has long, shaggy, jet-black hair, with four wide white stripes that run from nape to tail. Their head is broad but blunt with an individual pattern of white spots between the eyes and a stripe on each cheek. Their tail and the back of their ears are also mostly white. Like skunks, the zorilla may emit a strong-smelling liquid from its anal glands when threatened. However, the smell is less pungent than that of a skunk.

**Fun Facts**

1. Like skunks, the zorilla and striped weasels emits a strong-smelling liquid from its anal glands when threatened.
2. When threatened, the zorilla will play dead until the threat has passed, sometimes for as long as half an hour.
3. The striped weasel is one of the smallest carnivores in Africa.
4. The striped weasel is regarded by some to be a good luck charm.

**Habitat**

Grasslands, woodlands, montane grasslands, and within agricultural areas.

**Diet**

Invertebrates, reptiles, birds, eggs, and small mammals.

**Predators**

Larger African carnivores

**Behavior**

Zorillas and striped weasels are nocturnal and solitary. They are most active after dark and then return to their burrows, which are often just a pile of stones, before dawn. Much of their time is spent searching for food by digging or sniffing out concealed insects, reptiles, and small mammals.

**Breeding**

A solitary species, zorillas are usually only seen together when mating. They have a gestation period of 36 days, and females generally give birth to a litter of one to three young. Zorillas are born in the spring and summer, and are able to kill mice by around nine weeks old.

After a gestation period of 32 days, striped weasels give birth to a litter of one to three young. The young are weaned at 11 weeks and will reach sexual maturity between 1.5 and 3 years of age.

**Life Span:** 6-13 years

**Gestation Period:** 32**-**36 days

**Average number of offspring:** 1-3 young