for use in the water, as opposed to nets used for hunting on land. Similarly, at Enn. uar. 34 marina mustela indicates that this mustela is a fish, not a weasel.7)

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3) E. Courtney, The Fragmentary Latin Poets (Oxford 1993), 18, does not translate the verse nor do his comments clarify how he takes the phrase.
4) Babrius Fab. 9; Aesopica (ed. B.E. Perry) Fab. 11; Hdt. 1.141. See A. Traglia (ed.), Poeti Latini Arcaici vol. 1 (Turin 1986), Sat. 12, 370-1, footnote 18. For a discussion of the fable with bibliography (with special attention to its role in Herodotus’ narrative), see G.-J. van Dijk, Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi (Leiden 1997), 270-4.
5) For proptōr in a local sense with a moveable object cf. e.g. Ter. Ad. 169, Pl. Mil. 852.
6) Cf. Babrius Fab. 9.4: τὸ δίκτυον θεῖς ἐπερετίζεν εὐμούσως.

NOCTUABUNDUS AD ME VENIT . . . TABELLARIUS

The hapax legomenon noctuabundus in the passage (Cic. Att. 12.1.2) cum complicarem hanc epistulam, noctuabundus [noctu Abundus some edd.] ad me uenit cum epistula tua tabellarius was declared a crux and given to various emendations, on grounds of the inexistence of a corresponding verb noctuare: noctu <uag>abundus (modelled on νυκτίπλαγκτος) Reid (Hermathena 10 [1899], 130); noct(u)ambulus Tyrrell-Purser (in their commentary 1918, IV 486 ad locum); noctu <cunct>abundus Watt (Glotta 40 [1962], 118 f.), who moreover construes this with the grammatical subject of preceding complicarem, i.e. Cicero himself; nocturnabundus Shackleton Bailey (in his commentary 1966, V 308 ad locum). All these and other emendations over and above being unsatisfactory, either on account of context (Reid’s, Tyrrell-Purser’s) or of grammar, yielding a bizarre word order (Watt’s), or else because they represent too far-fetched a correction (Shackleton Bailey’s), are also unnecessary.

Those editions that, hesitatingly, uphold noctuabundus as transmitted also go wrong, under the pressure of the context as it is commonly understood, by taking this adjective, with its noctua- element expressing the notion of travel by night, as anterior to the main verb: ‘con la faccia di uno che ha fatto la notte’, ‘con la faccia insennolita’ (E. Pianezzola, Gli aggettivi verbali in -bundus [Firenze 1965], 124-126); ‘der die ganze Nacht gelaufen war’ (C.M. Wieland, M. Tullius Ciceros sämtliche Briefe [Stuttgart 1814], V 84); ‘after [my emphasis H.R.] travelling all night long’ (F.F. Abbott, Selected Letters of Cicero [Norman 1964], 214 ad locum) et sim.1) This is
grammatically inadmissible: the adjectives in -bundus supplement and fill in for the defective present -nt- participle;\(^2\) they occur almost exclusively in predicative position to verbs of motion (as is the case also in the passage under discussion) in a temporal relation of simultaneity or prospectivity with regard to the main verb.\(^3\) A -bundus adjective, or quasi-participle, will never stand in a relation of anteriority such as is suggested by all translations that uphold noctuabundus.\(^4\) How, then, can this really unshakable grammatical fact of relative time correspondence be reconciled with the context in which Cicero reports (12.1.1) to have been jotting down these few lines (hoc litterularum exarauī) on his departure just before daybreak (egre-diens . . . ante lucem), the said noctuabundus courier arriving while Cicero was folding up his own letter?\(^5\)

It can, since noctu-a-bundus is not derived directly from nox. While the interpretation which takes it as meaning ‘coming in the night, nightish’ (e.g. ‘da kommt noch halb in der Nacht . . .’, H. Kasten in the Heimeran edition 1959) is correct with respect to relative time, it clashes with Cicero’s ante lucem ‘just before daybreak’, and, more importantly, is formationally improbable: as a denominal derivative of a case-form (noctū), noctuare or noctuabundus would indeed be unparalleled and highly irregular. I take noctuā- to be a denominative base derived from the substantive noctua ‘owl’, noctuabundus uenit meaning ‘came as an owl’.\(^6\)

Owls are widely depicted in Antiquity, in literature as well as in plastic art, as bearers of glad or, mainly, sad tidings: profanus, Stygius, funereus et sim.— and not only typically the large owl (βρογύας, bubo), the venturi mun-tia luctus, ignauus bubo, dirum mortalibus omen (Ov. Met. 5.549-550), whose presence even necessitates a lustratio;\(^6\) cf., inter alia, the bubo as a bad omen together with the Eumenides at the wedding of Tereus and Procne (Ov. Met. 6.430-435) and as foreshadowing Caesar’s death (ibid. 15.791). The word noctua itself is occasionally employed in reference to the entire family, encompassing very different kinds of owls; note Plin. Nat. 29.117 on the axio (ὄτος, modern Asio), another notorious bird of ill omen: noctuarum id est genus, quibus pluma aurium modo micat.\(^7\) But even without taking the base noctua- as that of the broader term which comprises these notorious kinds of owls, but rather as referring specifically to representatives of the smaller genus, the γλακόξ, we may conceive of noctua as a vaticinating bird: so, in Latin literature, the noctua as dispensing weather forecasts in Plin. Nat. 18.362: serenitatem . . ., sicut noctua in imbre garrula, at sereno tempestatem and as one of the negative signa of fine weather in the Georgica 1.402-403 ( . . . nequiquam seros exercet noctua cantus). The case of Pyrrhus’ encounter with a γλακόξ (noctua) on his way towards his shameful defeat and death in Argos is adduced by Aelianus, De natura animalium 10.37, as an exemplum of the owl being an ὁ ωκ ἀγαθὸν σῶμαβολον for a person setting out on a mission. And generally, owls are bad news: nigraque funestum con-cinit omen auis (Prop. 2.28b.38), tristia . . . omina non albae concinuisistis aues (Ov. Am. 3.12.1-2).