

Common Raccoon

Procyon lotor



Raccoons are curious, unique, and intelligent creatures. These characteristics help them survive in the wild, but can also make for annoying neighbors. Though they prefer woodlands, they can live practically anywhere and have adapted well to human habitats.

Coastal Wetlands

Common Raccoon

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APPEARANCE

Length: 33 to 45 in. (84 to 104.5 cm)

Weight: 7 to 20 lb. (3 to 9 kg)

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Gray, with dark black markings around their eyes, and black bands on their tail
- Belly and muzzle are lighter colored while the feet are darker gray.
- Coat is medium length and coarse, and the tail is very bushy.
- Dexterous hands. Hands and feet have five fingers and toes.
- Stocky with short legs
- Small rounded ears

LIFE HISTORY

Range: North America

Diet: Fruits and nuts, insects and aquatic invertebrates, fish, small rodents, frogs, bird eggs, carrion and human garbage

Predators: Owls, coyotes, bobcats and humans

Sexual maturity: Male: 2 years; female: 1 year

Mating season: Mid to late summer

Gestation and birth: 60 to 74 days; four cubs

Young: Baby raccoons' ears and eyes open about 18-24 days after birth. They can walk around by the time they are four to six weeks old. Although they are weaned by three months, they remain with their mothers for another year.

Life span: 10 to 15 years



HABITAT

Raccoons prefer brushy or wooded areas near streams, lakes or swamps, although they can live close to developed areas if sufficient food, water and cover are provided.

BEHAVIOR

Raccoons are almost exclusively nocturnal. During the day they sleep in dens in the trees. During cold winter periods, they may sleep for an extended period, but do not hibernate. They are primarily solitary, and will only gather with other raccoons during breeding season. Raccoons are *polygamous*, they have a number of partners. Males do not stay to help raise the young.

NOW YOU KNOW!

- Raccoons have excellent night vision and an acute sense of hearing.
- They are very agile climbers and strong swimmers.
- They use their nimble fingers to feel stream bottoms for food, to climb trees and to open containers and garbage cans. They can find their way into a house to get food.
- Home ranges are about 3-4 square km, about half as small for females.

COMMON RACCOONS AND PEOPLE

The name "raccoon" came from an Algonquian Indian word *arakun*, which means "he scratches with his hands." During the 1700s, American colonists dropped the "a" in *arakun*, and the name became raccoon.

Wild raccoons accustomed to being fed by well-intentioned people will generally lose their natural fear of humans and seek to move closer to their food source—your house. Once raccoons take up residence in an attic or outbuildings they can become very destructive and difficult to remove. Malnutrition, diseases like rabies, and predation by humans, coyotes and bobcats take their toll, but raccoon populations are not in decline in most areas of Texas.