



Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*)

Order: Rodentia Family: Erethizontidae

SIZE: Weight, 10-28 lbs.; length, 18-22 inches; tail length, 7-9 inches.

DESCRIPTION: 30,000 long, sharp quills cover its stout body and tail. Long guard hairs on front half of body. Muscular tail aids in balance when climbing. Front feet are armed with long, curved claws. Soles of feet are covered with small, pebbly-textured fleshy knobs. Chisel-like front teeth are long, broad and yellow.

LOCOMOTION: Primarily terrestrial, but can climb trees to find food. Good swimmers. Gait is a slow, deliberate waddle. When feeding, it bears its weight mainly on hind feet.

SENSES: Poor eyesight. Good sense of hearing. Excellent sense of smell to guide them to food sources.

COMMUNICATION: During the fall mating season, a variety of squeaks, groans and grunts can be heard for ¼ mile.

HABITS: Found in forested areas, deserts and grasslands. Primarily a nocturnal and solitary animal, although during winter it may den up with other porcupines. During the day, it may rest in a hollow tree or log, underground burrow or treetop. Fond of salt, and are often seen at night on roadsides where salt has been used.

DEFENSE: Possess 30,000 quills, which are loosely attached to individual muscles beneath the skin. When confronted, the porcupine erects its quills, lowers its head, and swishes its tail back and forth to drive quills into

the nearby enemy. Each quills needle-sharp tip possesses many microscopic, overlapping barbs that cause it to become more deeply embedded in the victim. Wounds may become infected, or a quill may blind the victim or prevent it from eating. The porcupine cannot shoot its quills or send them flying like darts.

DIET: Herbivore. Diet includes inner tree bark, twigs, buds, leaves, seeds, roots and berries.

RANGE: United States except for midwest and southeast, Canada, Alaska and northern Mexico.

FAMILY LIFE: Courtship is elaborate and involves dancing and vocalization. Breeding occurs in fall. Normally, one precocial young is born after a gestation period of about 7 months. Quills are well formed and harden shortly after birth. Young can climb trees and eat solid food a few hours after birth.

NESTING: Dens in hollow trees, logs, caves and rock crevices. Usually more than one den.

ENEMIES: Fishers, mountain lions, bobcats and coyotes.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- Each quill has mild antibiotic properties just in case the porcupine gets poked with one of its own quills.
- The porcupine is the continents second largest, native rodent, next to the beaver.
- Quills are modified hairs, solid at tip and base, and hollow for most of the shaft.

Track

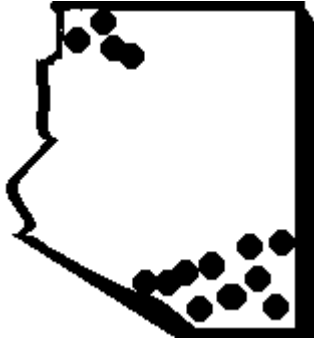
2 1/2 - 3 1/2 inches

long, 1 1/2 wide





Scat



Range

Northern Arizona, and Southeastern Arizona, not in the desert areas.