



Raccoon

(*Procyon lotor*)

Order: Carnivora **Family:** Procyonidae

SIZE: Weight, 12-35 lbs.; head and body, 18-28 inches. Northern raccoons are larger than those found in the south. Females are about 25% smaller than males.

DESCRIPTION: Body is stout covered with gray, black and brown fur. Head is broad, narrowing to pointed muzzle. Black patches under the eyes give a masked appearance. Eyes are black; ears are erect and prominent. Five to seven dark bands ring the tail and the tip is always dark. The soles of their feet are naked or partially hair-covered. Inquisitive and intelligent.

VOICE: Low twittering, trilling, purring, growls and snarls.

LOCOMOTION: Distinctive gait ranges from plantigrade to semi-plantigrade. Excellent climbers and strong swimmers.

HABITS: Prefers wooded areas near water, but may also be found in suburban areas close to big cities. Home range about one square mile. Territories overlap. Unrelated raccoons avoid confrontation except in the mating season when fights may occur over a female. Does not hibernate but will sleep through very cold weather relying on their fat stored from heavy feeding in the late summer and autumn.

DIET: Omnivorous. Crayfish, frogs, insects, mice, birds, eggs, insects, fruits, acorns, berries and plants.

RANGE: Panama north to southern Canada. Raccoons are not found at elevations over 8200 feet or in regions lacking water.

FAMILY LIFE: Polygamous with one male visiting 2 or 3 females. Mating takes place February or March. Three to five young are born April-May after a gestation period of about 63 days. Young open their eyes at about 21 days and will go on foraging expeditions with their mother at about 10 weeks of age. Young are darker in color than the adults, which probably helps to camouflage them. The male has no part in raising young. Sexual maturity is reached at one year, but most do not mate until the following year.

NESTING: Hollow trees, stumps, rock crevices, other animal burrows. Usually have several resting places.

ENEMIES: Adults have few natural enemies, although young are threatened by the great horned owl, wolf, coyote, large snakes and bobcat.

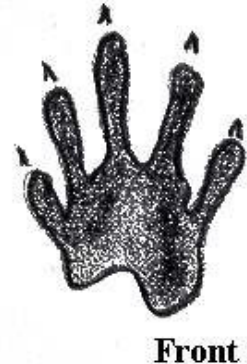
DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

- Although the raccoon appears to "wash" its food, this is actually a myth. The raccoon's acute sense of touch is accentuated by water, and it kneads and tears at its food to find the edible portions.
- Christopher Columbus was the first to put the raccoon on written record in his journal October 1492. He named the raccoon *perro mastin*, when translated means "dog like a clown" or masked dog.

Track

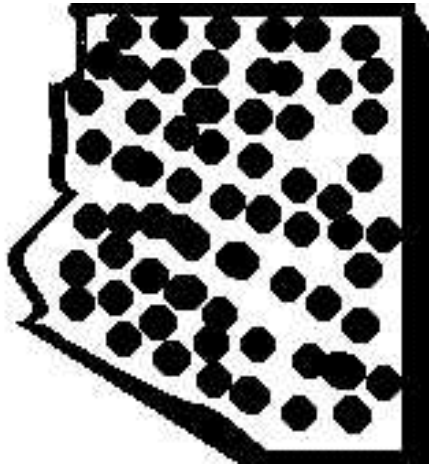
Front Foot is about
2 1/2 inches long.

Hind foot is about
3 1/8 inches long.



Scat

Scat is flat ended and contains insects, berries, mesquite beans, seeds and small rodents.



Range

Most of Arizona.