

# Raccoons



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## Raccoon Facts

Raccoons are medium sized, nocturnal (active at night) mammals that usually live in wooded areas near water. They are very adaptable, though, and often even live in cities. A raccoon will usually make its den in a tree, but it may make its home in an abandoned burrow, a cave, barn, old pipe, or even a house! :o



Raccoons are omnivorous and opportunistic. That means they will

eat plants or animals, or just about anything they can! Common foods include fruits, nuts berries, insects, mice, frogs, eggs, and crayfish. In some rural areas, raccoons will also steal from farmer's corn fields and raid chicken barns for food! In city areas they often dig through trash cans for food and eat pet food. Sometimes, if a raccoon is close to water, it may put its food in the water and roll it around. Although it kind of looks like it, it's not really "washing" its food. It's actually just getting it nice and soft to eat!



Raccoons have **gray to brown** fur with a **black** "mask" around the eyes with white fur around the mask. With their "masks", they look like a bandit... that sure doesn't help their reputations as rascals! They have a stripe that runs from the forehead to the nose and white fur around the nose. Their tails are **bushy** and ringed with black rings. The raccoons' little black paws have five toes and look a little like human hand. Their toes are flexible and very good for grabbing, pulling things apart and holding things. Raccoons are very good climbers and can go down a tree backwards or face first!



## Family Time

A mother Raccoon takes care of her babies, or kits, alone. She usually gives birth to between 2 and 5 babies in her den. Most baby Raccoons are born in the late spring and early summer. When they first come out of the den, the mother may carry them around by the neck, like a cat carries a kitten. The mother also teaches them how to hunt for food and climb trees. They are weaned from their mother at 70 days and start to hunt when they are between 9-12 weeks old. The mother raccoon is very protective of her young and will attack predators that come too close. Young raccoons have darker coats than older raccoons. The babies stay with their mother until the following spring.



Raccoons and other wild animals do not make good pets. It's also against the law to keep them in your home. They could carry disease, and usually become aggressive as they mature.

## A Raccoon Vocabulary

**Kits** – Baby raccoons

**Mammals** – A group of animals that usually have hair or fur, a backbone and are warm-blooded. Most female mammals give birth to live babies and feed them on milk.

**Nocturnal** – Active at night

**Omnivorous**- Eating both animal and plant foods.

**Opportunistic**- Taking advantage of any chance of possible benefit

## Living “With” Raccoons

Raccoons are curious, adaptable, and often right in our own back yards, especially if you live in rural (country) areas such as near Guadalupe River State Park. So when a raccoon is looking for food, it may go to a vegetable garden, fish pond, garbage can, or chicken coop. Its search for a den site may lead it to an attic, chimney, or crawl space. *The best way to avoid conflicts is to change the habitat around your home so as not to attract raccoons.* Here are some recommendations:

### **Don't feed raccoons.**

Raccoons that are fed by people often lose their fear of humans and may become aggressive when not fed as expected. Artificial feeding also tends to concentrate raccoons in a small area; overcrowding can spread diseases and parasites.

### **Don't give raccoons access to garbage.**

Keep your garbage can lid on tight and secure. Put your garbage cans in a location where raccoons can't tip them over. And wait to put your garbage cans out for pickup in the morning, after raccoons have returned to their resting areas.

### **Feed dogs and cats indoors and keep them in at night.**

If you must feed your pets outside, do so in late morning or at midday, and pick up food, water bowls, leftovers, and spilled food well before dark every day. Otherwise, you'll be feeding the raccoons all night!

### **Keep pets indoors at night.**

If cornered, raccoons may attack dogs and cats. Bite wounds from raccoons can result in sickness or injury.

### **Prevent raccoons from entering pet doors.**

Keep indoor pet food and any other food away from a pet door. Lock the pet door at night. If it is necessary to have it remain open, put an electronically activated opener on your pet's collar.

### **Put food in secure compost containers and clean up barbecue areas.**

Don't put food of any kind in open compost piles; instead, use a securely covered compost structure or a commercially available raccoon-proof composter to prevent attracting raccoons and getting exposed to their droppings. Clean barbecue grills and grease traps thoroughly following each use.

### **Eliminate access to denning sites.**

Raccoons commonly use chimneys, attics, and spaces under houses, porches, and sheds as den sites. Close any potential entries with ¼-inch mesh hardware cloth, boards, or metal flashing.

## Raccoons Word Search

W E V A I N T S J I M L D R F  
A M E C I W N H K K E V U M O  
S A A G N O U S A K Y F C B Z  
H S H M O J H X F B G D T I K  
R T M C M L D G P U C R T H S  
B A C D I A U L E S Y M Y E S  
V A A X D H L A W H A Z F X R  
R B A N X H V N W Y Q Y P T V  
H G V S L I B R L I A T T K S  
M D J O C H I U Q A Z Y Y C E  
N F L S L F N T K Q R V E M P  
O J Z G M N X C H S B W F Z M  
F K O M N I V O R E A U F V G  
L U V R L P G N S J O M H F B  
E T G I R O A N V B B C G W R

BUSHY  
MAMMAL  
OMNIVORE

FUR  
MASK  
RACCOONS

HUNT  
NIGHT  
RINGS

KIT  
NOCTURNAL  
WASH

## Raccoon Reads

Love raccoons and want to read more about them? There's lots of books out there all about our favorite animal rascal! Here some suggestions:

- **Raccoon on His Own**  
*by Jim Arnosky*  
Ages 4 – 8  
A curious young raccoon takes an unexpected trip downstream in a small wooden boat.
- **Raccoon Tune**  
*by Nancy Shaw*  
Ages 4 - 8  
A family of raccoons prowls around a neighborhood making a ruckus until they find supper
- **Raccoons**  
*by William Ripple*  
Ages 4 - 8  
A simple introduction to the lives and behaviors of raccoons.
- **Raccoon Moon**  
*by Nancy Carol Willis*  
Ages 4 - 8  
Three newborn raccoon cubs learn to climb trees, find food, take a swim, and escape dangerous predators with the help of their mother.
- **Kit: The Adventures of a Raccoon**  
*by Shirley E. Woods*  
Ages 9 - 12  
A realistic story about a young raccoon learning to survive in the wild.
- **Raccoons on the Roof**  
*by Ben M Baglio*  
Ages 9 - 12  
Mandy tries to save raccoons from a neighbor who wants to kill them.
- **Rascal**  
*by Sterling North*  
Ages 9 - 12  
The author recalls his carefree life in a small Midwestern town at the close of World War I, and his adventures with his pet raccoon, Rascal.