

THE ARBORETUM AT PENN STATE

# NORTHERN RACCOON

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**NAME:** *Procyon lotor*

### CONSERVATION STATUS:



**SIZE:** 2–3 feet

**WEIGHT:** 4–23 pounds

**GROUP TERM:** gaze

**NUMBER OF YOUNG:** 2–5

**HABITAT:** generalist; varied

**LIFESPAN:** 2–3 years

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# NORTHERN RACCOON

## DESCRIPTION

The Northern raccoon can be easily recognized by its distinctive black tail rings and mask. Its dark facial markings, used to reduce sun glare and improve night vision, have resulted in the raccoon being given the nickname, “the masked bandit.” This animal is a habitat generalist, able to adapt to a variety of environments, including urban and suburban landscapes. In the wilderness, raccoons make their dens in tree hollows, but may also frequently take up residence in man-made structures such as attics, sewers, barns, and sheds.

## DIET

Raccoons have an enormously varied omnivorous diet consisting of small mammals, bird eggs, fruit, nuts, fish, rodents, and insects. They are notorious for raiding human garbage cans and are frequently found seeking food in urban areas.

## THREATS

Raccoons face threats from predation (bobcats, coyotes, and large owls), vehicle collisions, and, in some states, trapping and hunting.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Christopher Columbus was the first known person to have documented raccoons.
- Raccoons have extremely dexterous paws, using them to climb trees and manipulate their food.
- The word “raccoon” comes from the Powhatan word meaning “the animal that scratches with its hands.”

“Raccoon Fact Sheet.” *Nature*. Public Broadcasting Service, 7 Feb. 2012. Web. 22 June 2017.

“Animals: Raccoon.” National Geographic, n.d. Web. 22 June 2017.

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