

Raccoons Identification and Biology

By DoMyOwn staff

Physical Appearance

The raccoon may be easily identified by its stealthy bandit-like appearance, including a black face mask and ringed tail. Other physical traits include:

- small round ears and little beady eyes
- fur is usually grayish but may also appear yellow when shedding
- sharp claws for climbing
- may grow to a length of 3 feet and weigh up to 30 pounds

Behavior & Habitat

The common raccoon is found throughout North America and Canada. Raccoons are excellent climbers and seasoned swimmers. Like many other pests, raccoons are difficult to catch because they sleep during the day and become active (foraging for food) at night. Raccoons have been known to make dens out of tree cavities, basements, or attics.

Feeding Habits

The raccoon's typical diet consists of vegetables and fruits, acorns, birds, mice, amphibians, and earthworms. Raccoons can also swim and will quickly make a snack of fish, turtles, frogs, worms, and clams found in lakes and streams.

Life Cycle

Raccoons mate primarily between January and March. Gestation period is about 9 weeks, and average number of young per litter is 4. Young raccoons will then stay near their mother for 4 to 5 months, with the mother taking an extremely protective role and biting or hissing when young are approached. Male raccoons do not stick around to help rear their young. A raccoon may live about 7 years in the wild.

Damage

Despite their innocent looking, cute little faces, raccoons actually have quite a reputation for being mischievous and destructive. Raccoons often knock down trash cans and uproot gardens and sod in search of a meal. Raccoons may also carry and transmit diseases such as rabies or roundworm. Raccoons are capable of becoming aggressive and biting humans or other animals when they are rabid or feel threatened.

General Prevention & Control :

- **Prevent access.** The most common entrance to a home for raccoons is down the chimney, or else through a window by way of the roof.
- **Trim trees** and other shrubbery away from the house and roof
- **Secure a cap of sheet metal** over the chimney outlet
- **Electric fences** may keep raccoons out of lawn and garden
- **Limit food sources** by using only garbage cans with tight fitting lids.
- **Bait and Trap** with the [Havahart Cage Trap Model 1079](#)

For more detailed information on raccoon prevention and control, see [How To Get Rid of Raccoons](#)

View [Raccoon Control](#) products