

Name _____



Raccoons: Clever and Curious Nighttime Visitors

Raccoons are fascinating creatures known for their cleverness and curious nature. They are animals that you might have spotted in your neighborhood, especially when the sun goes down. These masked bandits are quite special, so let's learn more about them!

What Do Raccoons Look Like?

Raccoons have a distinctive appearance. They are medium-sized mammals covered in dense fur that can range from gray to brown. The most noticeable feature is their black mask-like markings around their eyes, which make them look like they're wearing a tiny robber's mask. Raccoons have bushy tails with rings, similar to those of a raccoon's cousin, the ringtail.

Where Do Raccoons Live?

Raccoons are incredibly adaptable and can live in various habitats. They are commonly found in forests, wetlands, urban areas, and even near rivers and streams. They like to be close to water sources because they enjoy fishing for their meals.

What Do Raccoons Eat?

Raccoons are omnivores, which means they eat both plants and animals. They have a diverse diet, feasting on things like fruits, nuts, insects, and small animals like frogs and mice. You might have even seen them rummaging through garbage cans looking for leftover human food.

How Do Raccoons Move?

Raccoons are excellent climbers and swimmers. They have sharp claws that help them climb trees and explore high places. Their front paws are incredibly dexterous, almost like human hands, which makes them skilled at opening things like trash cans and doors. Raccoons are also good swimmers, and they can paddle through water with ease.

Family Life

Raccoons are usually solitary animals, but during mating season, they come together to form temporary groups. Baby raccoons, called kits, are born blind and helpless. They depend on their mothers for care and protection. Raccoon mothers are very attentive and will do their best to keep their kits safe.

Conservation

Raccoons are quite resourceful, which has helped them adapt to living near people. While they can be seen as a nuisance when they get into garbage cans or cause other mischief, they are an important part of the ecosystem. They help control populations of some animals and insects, which keeps nature in balance.

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Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What distinctive markings do raccoons have around their eyes?
2. Why are raccoons often seen near water sources?
3. What type of diet do raccoons have?
4. What special ability do raccoons have with their front paws?
5. What are baby raccoons called, and why do they depend on their mothers?