



Level I: Grades K–2

FACTS ABOUT RACCOONS

Raccoon Characteristics

Raccoons are mammals who are covered with bushy fur. They are known for their distinctive mask and sharp claws. Their mask may help reduce glare and make it easier for them to see at night. They are usually grey and brown, with long, bushy tails with rings that resemble the rings of a lemur. Raccoons can swim well and stay in the water for long periods of time. They have small ears that are often ringed in white. A baby raccoon is called a kit. If there is more than one, they are kittens. Young raccoons are called cubs.

Where they live

Raccoons may live in trees in our very own backyards. Raccoons live in trees for protection from animals on the ground. Raccoons also live on the ground, in dens and tree stumps. Some raccoons live alone while others live in small groups. They stay in their dens during the day and come out at night to find food. They are nocturnal animals. Although they don't actually hibernate, northern raccoons sleep for long periods of time in the winter.

What they eat

Raccoons are omnivores—they eat fruit, berries, small mammals, insects, and discarded table food.

What you should do if you see a raccoon

You should never try to approach a raccoon. Raccoons are wild animals and not pets, and they don't understand when people want to play. They do not want to be touched and may become aggressive if they are frightened. It is best to stay away and watch from a distance. Never chase a raccoon. (For more information, refer to the book *Where Are the Night Animals?*)