

Anthropogenic Resources Effects on Raccoon Migration and Spread

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Commentary

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ABOUT THE STUDY

The raccoon, often known as the common raccoon to distinguish it from other species, is a North American mammal. It is the largest member of the procyonid family, measuring 40 to 70 cm (16 to 28 in) in length and weighing 5 to 26 kg (11 to 57 lb). Its greyish coat is largely made up of dense underfur that protects it from the cold. Three of the raccoon's most distinguishing characteristics are its incredibly dexterous front paws, its facial mask, and its ringed tail, all of which are motifs in indigenous peoples' mythology about the animal. The raccoon is known for its intellect, since studies have shown that it can recall task solutions.

Raccoons originated in deciduous and mixed forests, but due to their versatility, they have expanded their range to include hilly places, coastal marshes, and urban areas, where they are considered pests by some homeowners. Raccoons have now spread across much of mainland Europe, the Caucasus, and Japan as a result of escapes and planned introductions in the mid-20th century.

Since 2016, the raccoon has been on the European Union's list of Invasive Alien Species of Concern (the Union list). This means that in the European Union as a whole, this species cannot be imported, bred, transported, commercialised, or purposefully released into the environment.

Raccoons are now known to engage in sex-specific social behaviour, despite previously being assumed to be primarily solitary. In order to preserve their places against foreign males during the mating season and other potential intruders, connected females generally share a common territory, whereas unrelated males dwell in groups of up to four raccoons. Females' home ranges in cities range from 3 hectares (7.4 acres) to 5,000 hectares (12,000 acres) for males in the plains. In the spring, two to five young, called as "kits," are born after a 65-day

gestation period. The kits are then nursed by their mother until late October, when they are dispersed. Raccoons in captivity have been known to survive for over 20 years, although their life expectancy in the wild is far shorter.

The common raccoon, North American raccoon, and northern raccoon are all names for the same species. The word "raccoon" was derived from a native Powhatan term that meant "beast that scratches with its hands" and was used in the Virginia Colony. "Before-dog washer" is its Latin name ". It was documented as aroughcun on John Smith's list of Powhatan terms, and as arathkone on William Strachey's. It's also a reflex of the Proto-Algonquian root ahrah-koon-em, which means "one who rubs, cleanses, and scratches with its hands. "The word can also be spelt racoon. The Nahuatl mapachtli of the Aztecs inspired the Spanish word mapache, which means "one who grabs all in its hands."

Words like coonskin for fur apparel and phrases like old coon as a self-designation of trappers utilise the colloquial abbreviation coon. The United States Whig Party adopted the raccoon as their symbol in the 1830s, earning them the moniker "coons" from their political opponents, who considered them as too sympathetic to African-Americans. Soon after, the phrase was used as an ethnic insult, particularly between 1880 and 1920, and it is still regarded derogatory today. Raccoon-hunting dogs are known as "coonhounds" or "coon dogs."

The first known members of the Procyonidae family lived in Europe some 25 million years ago, according to fossil evidence from Russia and Bulgaria. Procyonids and weasels have similar tooth and skull features, implying a common ancestor, although DNA evidence suggests a closer link between raccoons and bears. The core of the species' range was most likely in Central America when it crossed the Bering Strait at least six million years later in the early Miocene. Coatis (*Nasua* and *Nasuella*) and raccoons (*Procyon*) are thought to be descended from a *Paranasua*-like species that lived between 5.2 and 6.0 million years ago.

This hypothesis, based on morphological fossil similarities, contradicts a 2006 DNA study that found raccoons are more closely linked to ringtails. Unlike other procyonids, such as the crab-eating raccoon (*Procyon cancrivorus*), the common raccoon's ancestors abandoned tropical and subtropical habitats and travelled north around 2.5 million years ago, a migration that has been corroborated by the discovery of Pliocene fossils in the Great Plains. *Procyon rexroadensis*, a huge Blancan raccoon from the Rexroad Formation with narrow back teeth and a large lower jaw, was most likely its most recent progenitor.