

# School-to-Nature

## Raccoon



Raccoons are present on all Caledonia Conservancy lands, and they live around humans as well. They have long, fluffy grey-brown fur and bushy striped tails. The black and white “mask” markings around their eyes, and their white-edged pointed ears, make them easy to identify. Adult raccoons can measure up to 18 inches long and can weigh up to 20 pounds. Males are larger than females. The life expectancy in the wild is only 2-3 years (many are hunted or hit by cars); but some have reached 20 years old in captivity. Their habitat is anywhere there is food: prairies, marshes, forests, cities.

Raccoons have very flexible toes, allowing them to climb both up and down a tree head first. They are also good swimmers. They are capable of running up to 15 mph to avoid a predator; but they prefer to walk or climb slowly and casually.

They are nocturnal, but they are busiest hunting at dawn and dusk. Their food sources are: crayfish, frogs, turtles, mice, insects, birds’ eggs, fruits, green plants, seeds and nuts. They also find food in garbage cans and bird feeders.

Raccoons spend most of the winter hibernating, in cozy dens made in tree cavities, abandoned fox holes, rock crevasses, or brush piles. Some racoons get into attics and chimneys. They mate late in winter. In spring the female gives birth to 2 to 5 kits. The mother cares for them until they can hunt on their own. If you find babies without a mother nearby, do not take them immediately; but watch for at least a full day to see that they are not orphaned. If the mother is gone, research and phone someone (a wildlife rescue/rehabilitator) who is qualified to raise them to be returned to the wild.

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