

Life History of the Raccoon

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The raccoon is a member of the family Procyonidae. Densities of raccoons range from 30-60 raccoons per square mile depending on habitat quality and available den sites.

DESCRIPTION: Weights of adult raccoons in Alabama usually range from 8-14 pounds. Raccoons are easily distinguished by their black facial mask and ringed tail. Raccoon populations are widely distributed due to their ability to use a variety of habitat types.



REPRODUCTION: Raccoons are polygamous with occasional pair bonding. The breeding season runs from about February to May. The gestation period ranges from 63 to 73 days, and females have one litter per year. Litter size ranges from 1- 6 kittens with an average of three kittens per litter. Only the female cares for the young.

HABITAT: Raccoons use a variety of habitat types; although mature bottomland hardwoods and areas close to rivers and ponds are used most frequently. Home ranges vary from 80-1,000 acres. Raccoons prefer tree cavities as den sites, and this can be a factor limiting populations. Agricultural fields, particularly corn, are frequently used when crops mature.

DIET: The raccoon is omnivorous, usually feeding on equal proportions of plant and animal matter. Plant material in the raccoon's diet includes hard mast such as acorns and soft mast such as blackberries and persimmons. Animal matter consumed includes crustaceans, invertebrates, rats, mice, moles, birds and eggs of ground nesting birds. Soft mast, crustaceans and invertebrates are consumed more frequently during the spring and summer, whereas hard mast is consumed more during the fall and winter.

DISEASES: Canine distemper and rabies are the two primary diseases affecting raccoon populations, although tularemia, leptospirosis and trichinosis may affect populations. Raccoons are also infested with a variety of external and internal parasites such as ticks, fleas, roundworms, tapeworms and stomach worms.

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This information is provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission

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