

CARNIVORA

(Carnivores)

Canines



Felines



Weasels



Raccoons



Bears

(not native to the Mojave Desert)



Skunks



Family **CANIDAE** (Canines)

Coyote (*Canis latrans*)

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 48" Ht: 25" Wt: 30 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

dog-like; rusty-gray coat; buff belly, chest, throat, muzzle; bushy tail with black tip (sometimes with white); both genders similar

Notes:

common; ranges throughout continental US, north into s and w Canada, and se Alaska; active day and night preying mainly on small mammals (rabbits, hares, etc.) but will also eat just about anything opportune (birds, amphibians, reptiles, etc.); can run up to 40 mph

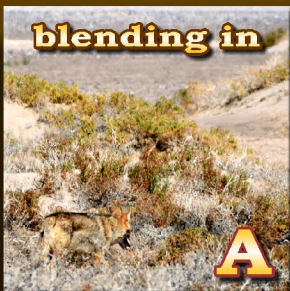
Mojave presence: native



Corn Creek; Desert NWR, NV



Joshua Tree National Park



Salt Creek; Death Valley NP



Badwater; Death Valley NP



Avawatz Mtns; Shoshone, CA



Hualapai Plateau; Arizona



Badwater; Death Valley NP



Salt Creek; Death Valley NP

Comments

Coyotes have adapted to a variety of habitats from woodland to prairie and desert, each providing a diverse selection of menu items. (B) prowling creosote scrubland for a meal; (C) at home in the prairie lands of the Colorado Plateau Province; (D) looking rather scrawny; I witnessed this fellow making a living for two straight days by mooching from tourists at [Badwater Basin](#) in [Death Valley NP](#) during the gov't shutdown in Sept., 2019 (a couple walking on the side of the road didn't even notice him following them!); (E) snacking on rare pupfish! I followed him from near the source of the spring (A) where the water was relatively deeper, all the way to the parking area (about a mile) where the creek shallowed enough for him to snatch a few unlucky denizens. Hardly enough to fill a hungry belly!

Family **CANIDAE** (Canines)

Gray Fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*)

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 37" Ht: 15" Wt: (m) 15 lbs (f) 8 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

dog-like appearance; grizzled gray coat with rusty flanks, collar, legs; white on ears, throat, chest; long (to 18 inches), dark, bushy tail with black stripe down middle; dark patches on sides of snout; female smaller, otherwise little sexual dimorphism

Notes:

common, but rarely encountered; lives in wooded areas across NA from s Canada south to northern Venezuela and Columbia; mainly nocturnal, occasionally crepuscular or even diurnal; omnivorous (mainly rabbits, rodents, also insects, fruit, etc.); can climb trees (rare for canids); 16 subspecies

Mojave presence: native (s NV, sw UT, nw AZ); rare

Comments:

Anytime you're a regular at a certain location, you're bound to earn a name. Such was the case for this fox at Willow Springs in the **Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area**. "Charlie" would show up almost on cue scrounging for morsels at the popular tourist picnic and hiking area, and would dutifully pose for pictures. A couple things worked against him, however; feeding wildlife is unlawful in the RRCNCA, and the local trash bins were animal proofed! Charlie must have finally moved on, because I haven't seen him since May of 2016.



Family **FELIDAE** (Felines)

Mountain Lion (*Felis concolor*)

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 96" Ht: 30" Wt: (m) ~170 lbs (f) ~110 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

large cat with reddish to gray coat; buff chest, belly, muzzle; black patch at base of whiskers; tail long (to 30") with black tip

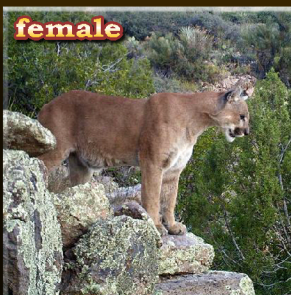
Notes:

uncommon; solitary and secretive; ranges throughout w NA, south to SA generally in higher-elevation forests and canyons; hunts mammals (deer, rabbits/hares, rodents, etc.); mainly nocturnal, though sometimes active in the daytime; known by different names in various locations (e.g. cougar, puma, panther)

Mojave presence: rnative: rare



Comments:



Aquarius Mtns; Mohave Co., AZ

One can spend a lifetime without ever seeing a mountain lion, yet someone else may see this majestic cat come down out of the mountains and into his backyard!

Personally, I've never had a good look at a wild mountain lion; nothing better than a fleeting glance. The photo at left was taken by a trail camera set up by a friend of mine, John Holmes, in an area known to be traveled by these cats. It finally captured this spectacular shot in the Aquarius Mountains off of US 93 between Interstate-40 and Wikiup, AZ.

Family **FELIDAE** (Felines)

Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 34" Ht: 18" Wt: (m) 27 lbs (f) 21 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

medium size (about twice that of domestic cats); tan to gray coat with spotted patterning; ears tufted; short, namesake "bobbed" tail (to 7 inches); female smaller, otherwise both genders similar

Notes:

relatively common, but solitary and elusive, thus seldom seen; ranges in various habitats (e.g. woodlands, swamps, deserts, mountains) throughout NA from s Canada to Mexico; preys mostly on hares, rabbits, and rodents, but also birds, deer, etc.

Mojave presence: native



Comments:

Depending on where you live, this is another example of a relatively common animal that most people never see in the wild. I was one of those unfortunates until one day I spotted what could have passed as an overgrown housecat (save for its distinctively short tail) walking alongside the BNSF railroad tracks in Kingman, AZ. Obviously this particular cat had grown accustomed to the urban environment and had no qualms about being spotted so casually in the daytime. Unfortunately, I was driving when I saw it, and by the time I stopped to get a photo...poof!

On the otherhand, my college buddy lived in Frisco, TX, where the cats, along with rather brazen coyotes, were regular visitors to his backyard! To him they were just ordinary neighbors!



Joshua Tree NP



photo: Jeanne Tinsman

Corn Creek; DNWR; NV

Family **MUSTELIDAE** (Weasels)

American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*)

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 27" Ht: ~10" Wt: (m) 19 lbs (f) 15 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

stocky, flat body (wider than tall); grizzled, rusty to gray coat; bold white stripe down middle of head to nose, and white cheeks with black patches; pale throat and undersides

Notes:

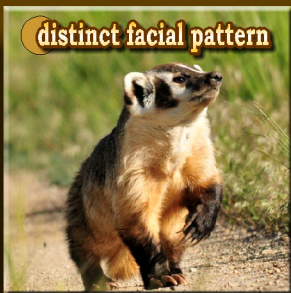
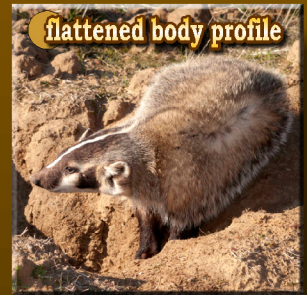
uncommon; secretive and mostly nocturnal, thus rarely seen; prefers habitats with soft soils to burrow and dig for food; ranges from s and c Canada, south through most of US (except se) and into most of Mexico; preys mainly on small mammals (e.g. rodents, groundhogs, gophers, moles, etc.); female slightly smaller, otherwise both genders similar

Mojave presence: native; rare

Comments

The only badger I've ever seen in the wild was in the late summer of 2020 at the [Corn Creek](#) field station in the [Desert National Wildlife Refuge](#) about 30 miles northwest of Las Vegas, NV. I was actually there to take pictures of birds, and while focusing on a subject in a tree, something suddenly bolted from its concealment just beside me. All I was able to discern in that fleeting moment was its relatively large size and flattened body as the animal disappeared under a walk bridge overpassing a creek.

Talking with the resident rangers later, I was informed that indeed a badger had been reported by several other eyewitnesses. They surmised that a newcomer had recently established its territory at the facility. He's already dug numerous burrows around the area! Now I'm on a mission to see this badger again, and post photos when/if I get lucky enough to take them.



Family **PROCYONIDAE** (Raccoons)

Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 32" Ht: ~ 12" Wt: (m) 20 lbs (f) 15 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

overall gray to brown coat; white face with pointed snout and black mask; bushy, light-and-dark banded tail with black tip; female smaller, otherwise genders indistinguishable

Notes:

common; indigenous to se US, having spread in the past couple centuries throughout NA from coast to coast, Canada to Panama, due to urbanization, elimination of natural predators, deliberate introduction to new habitats, etc. (feral populations in Europe, Japan); mainly nocturnal and crepuscular, though sometimes active in daylight; omnivorous, foraging for invertebrates, fish, amphibians, bird and reptile eggs, fruits, nuts, vegetables, etc.

Mojave presence: native; rare



famously masked face

checking me out...

LV Wash; CCWP; LV, NV



grayish coat

...guess I'm OK

LV Wash; CCWP; LV, NV



bushy, banded tail

LV Wash; CCWP; LV, NV



avid climber

Pompano Beach, FL



Comments

This is an odd example of a common animal that most people simply take for granted or even disdain, yet until January, 2020, I had never actually seen one in the wild! Growing up in Maryland where they are plentiful (*P. l. lotor*), I had never encountered one; 40 years out west...zilch! On a trip to see family in Pompano Beach, Florida, I finally captured my first glimpse of a wild 'coon (*P. l. elucus*) in the waning light of dusk (above). Common or not, it was still a rewarding experience for me.

While raccoons do reside in some areas of the Mojave, they are nevertheless rare in the desert. I finally saw my first one in July, 2021, scrounging along the bank of Las Vegas Wash at the [Clark County Wetlands Park](#) (top photos)...at 12:40 on a hot afternoon (107 degrees)! So much for the nocturnal/crepuscular life; guess he didn't read the manual!

Ca7

Family **PROCYONIDAE** (Raccoons)

Ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*)

Measurements:

Ave. Length: 28" Ht: 6" Wt: (m) 1.5 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

gray to brown coat; long, bushy tail (to 24 inches) with many alternating black and white bands; large, alert eyes with distinct white eyerings; large rounded ears; both genders similar

Notes:

relatively common in arid, mountainous, riparian habitats, though very rarely encountered; ranges throughout western NA from OR south through Mexico, CA east to KS; almost exclusively nocturnal; omnivorous, especially small mammals, reptiles, arachnids, insects, fruit, etc.; mistakenly known as **Ringtail Cat**

Mojave presence: native; rare (sky islands in s NV, sw UT)

Comments

I've only encountered this secretive and elusive animal once in all my years of overnight camping . . . a late-night visitor to my campsite on Mt. Potosi in the Spring Mtns near Las Vegas. When it woke me, my stirring startled it; as it scampered away, all I really saw was a quick glimpse of its distinctively ringed tail!

