



### FAST FACTS

**Name:** Raccoon

**Scientific name:** *Procyon lotor*

**Average weight:** 5 - 12 kg, max. 22 - 26 kg

**Life expectancy:** average 5 years

**Did you know?**

The raccoon's English name comes from the Algonquian word *arukan*, meaning "he who scratches with his hand."

### PHYSIOLOGY

The raccoon's mischievous black mask is what people remember most about the furry scavenger. In addition to the band running from one side of its face to the other, the raccoon has a big, busy tail with an average of five to 10 alternating black and brown rings. Its body is normally grey in colour, but can vary from albino to black or brown. The raccoon also has an annual moult when, beginning in the spring, it sheds its fur for about three months. Male raccoons are normally 25 percent larger than females, and raccoons in northern latitudes tend to be heavier than their southern relatives.

### HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

The raccoon can live in a wide range of habitats, requiring only a source of water, food, and a protected area for denning in order to survive. The habitats best suited for it are hardwood swamps, floodplain forests, fresh and saltwater marshes, and both cultivated and abandoned farmland. It is also found in cities all over the country.

Although potentially false, the raccoon is thought to have the habit of washing food with its front paws, as suggested by its' species name, *Lotor*. Because captive raccoons have been seen doing the same type of "washing" action, it is thought that the behaviour is innate.

The raccoon is one of the few animals that is successfully able to go from family pet back to wild animal. Male raccoons, however, cannot stay captive for long. They are known to become aggressive as they mature and normally have to be set free.

The raccoon is also a strong swimmer, but only when forced to swim. It is known more for its climbing abilities. It is capable of making a variety of sounds, including whistling, shrieking, chattering, clicking its teeth, snarling and growling.

### RANGE

In Canada, the raccoon is found in northern Alberta, southern B.C. and Saskatchewan, central Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario, southern Quebec and the Maritimes. In agricultural regions of eastern North America, its range is between one and four square kilometres. In prairie habitat, however, it has areas up to 50 square kilometres, and urban raccoons normally occupy less than 0.1 square kilometres. Raccoon ranges can overlap, and there is very little evidence that they are territorial.