

Raccoon

The “washing bear” is a masked bandit! They can get into spaces as small as 2 ½ inches by 4 inches. Do not let the agile hands and ringed tail fool you into thinking these animals make good pets. Just like the skunk, they are a nice size to for many predatory species. Males are an average of 10 to 15 pounds and females 6 to 12 pounds. If overfed by humans, these animals can become as large 60 pounds! They are agile climbers, fearless when confronted, have powerful nails and sharp teeth. They are opportunistic in their choice of diet (the list of what they do not eat is shorter than what they do eat). They prefer the company of their own kind; contrary to the belief these animals solitary, they are highly social and have ‘kin-based’ group organization.

Females tend to the young kits alone. The young are born in April to May (occasionally a second litter is born in late summer). Litter size is 2 to 7. The young wander out at 8 to 10 weeks of age. The young will traditionally remain with the family group through their first winter. They do not hibernate in winter, but can remain in the den for several days at a time. Nocturnal activity is the most common. It is not uncommon to see them in the daylight hours.

Eviction / Removal: If they cannot find a meal or shelter, they will move on.

Gentle harassment techniques: (DO NOT attempt if babies are present)

Within the home range, most raccoons have many den sites.

If babies are present please be patient, the mother will move them when they are ready.

If the animal is simply seeking shelter from the cold of winter, rest assured they will move along on their own. If the temperature is **not** below freezing you may try the variety of deterrents listed below.

Visual deterrents: Bright lights, motion detector lights, light reflective balloons.

Auditory deterrents: Human voices (radio on a talk station) played in the target area (the den entrance).

Taste/Smell deterrents: Urine or ammonia is disturbing. Fresh predator urine is a warning sign to prey species. Ammonia is synthetic, but can be a useful tool; Apple cider vinegar also has potential. The scent of human sweat has had success (finally a use for those sweaty gym socks!).

To ensure the Raccoon does not find your space inviting do not leave pet food outside and secure trash can lids. “animal resistant cans” available at www.animalresistantcan.com and www.crittercan.org.

Well-irrigated soil is home to earthworms and grubs – raccoon food. A capsaicin hot sauce may be effective. Simply reducing the watering may also be effective. Place a battery-operated radio tuned to an all night talk show for a few nights might keep them out of the garden. Use single strand electric fencing 4 to 8 inches off the ground around heavily frequented plants.

Making ‘fish safe zones’ in the pond using cinderblocks, rocks etc. Placing electric wire around the pond. Rabbit enclosures should be indoors. Chicken enclosures should be secure. Dogs and cats should not be allowed to roam free, particularly at night.

Make sure crawl spaces, attics, porches have strong secure barriers (16 gauge wire is recommended).

Keep in mind these animals are intelligent. It is best to ‘mix and match’.

There are four common carriers of the rabies virus. Fox, Skunk, Bat, & Raccoon are the four rabies vector species in the U.S. The Raccoon is also a natural host to a parasite, commonly known as the raccoon roundworm. Humans are infected through contact with feces or contaminated soil.

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