

## Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)



**ORIGIN:** North and Central America, widespread from Canada to Panama

**INTRODUCED TO EUROPE:** 1927

**IMPORTED WAYS AND IMPORTED VECTORS:** Brought to Europe in the 19th century for zoological gardens. Escaped from fur farms in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s and deliberately released. After that, independent dispersal in Europe. The species is kept as pets and in zoos, but is no longer present in fur farms in Europe.

**MAIN CHARACTERISTICS:** Raccoons grow to a size of 40 to 60 cm and have a tail 20 to 40 cm long. The face shows a characteristic black mask-like pattern surrounded by white fur. The dense fur is long-haired and gray to brown in color, and the tail has several dark rings.

**BIOLOGY:** Raccoons are nocturnal and crepuscular omnivores. They often climb trees, where they spend the night in tree hollows. The adaptable animals prefer old-growth forests near water bodies, on the outskirts of cities they inhabit buildings that are not or not regularly inhabited. Females give birth to 2 to 4 young once a year, which become sexually mature after 1 to 2 years. Raccoons eat eggs and young birds, among other things, as well as amphibians, reptiles, and fish; negative impacts on pond turtles and yellow-bellied toads have been documented.

**STATUS:** In Central Europe currently widespread, from France to Belarus, single finds in Spain and Great Britain, with a distribution focus in Germany.