

# MEET YOUR WILD NEIGHBOR: RACCOONS



Mate in late winter and use a wide range of natural and manmade den and resting sites that may include unprotected attics and chimneys

Highly intelligent mammals able to swim, climb and solve complex puzzles

Small, very sensitive, human-like hands with five fingers but no thumb

Found in almost every major urban, suburban and rural habitat in the 48 contiguous states

Varied and seasonal diet of nuts, fruits and vegetables, insects, invertebrates, fish, amphibians, snakes, mice and baby rats

Adept at exploiting human sources of food like unprotected trash and birdseed

Usually nocturnal but may forage or respond to predators, humans or other potential threats during the day

## PREVENT RACCOON RUN-INS

- Never intentionally feed raccoons; avoid feeding pets outside and pick up fallen fruit.
- Purchase wildlife-proof trash cans, or secure lids with bungee cords.
- Hang bird feeders from clotheslines, purchase raccoon guards, or consider removing bird feeders and installing seeding and fruiting native plants instead.
- Try hot sauce, motion-activated lights and sprinklers if an unwanted raccoon is frequenting a place in your yard where you don't want them.
- Use single-strand electric wire or exclusion fencing around raised vegetable beds or to protect fish in backyard ponds.
- If unoccupied, cover attic and crawl space gaps and install chimney caps; use lockable pet doors.
- Lock all duck and chicken coop doors and use 16-gauge 1-inch welded wire to protect windows and open areas.



## HANDLE RACCOON RUN-INS

**IN YOUR ATTIC?** Never trap and relocate raccoons, which usually means death for both the raccoon and her kits. Humanely harass your unwanted tenants with a combination of bright lights, loud noises and strong smells, such as a bowl of cider vinegar. Once you're certain they're all gone, cover available entry points with 16-gauge wire mesh or metal flashing to prevent future wildlife from moving in. If raccoons have occupied the space for a long time and feces have accumulated, follow the Center for Disease Control's removal recommendations or hire cleanup professionals to safely clean the latrine area.

**IN YOUR CHIMNEY?** Never try to smoke them out, as kits and mom are often trapped and die from smoke inhalation, making your removal problem far worse. The most effective and humane approach is to wait until after they move out, which they will, allowing you to install a chimney cap to prevent future issues. If waiting isn't an option, hire a wildlife professional who will keep the raccoon family intact and release within their home range using an eviction, exclusion and reunion strategy.

→ **It's their world, too!** Visit [humanesociety.org/raccoons](https://www.humanesociety.org/raccoons) to learn more about your Wild Neighbors.