

Mammals



Learn More About Mammals

- Mammals are vertebrates. They have a backbone.
- Mammals are warm blooded. They maintain a constant body temperature.
- Mammals have a four chambered heart.
- Mammals breathe air with lungs, even if they live in the water.
- Female mammals produce milk for their young offspring from organs called mammary glands.
- Nearly all mammals give birth to live young.
- Nearly all mammals have hair on some part of their bodies.

Mammal Reference: Brown, Larry N., 1997. "A Guide to the Mammals of the Southeastern United States." The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, TN

Personal Contact with NWRC Scientists: Tommy McGinnes, Richard Day, Sergio Marino, Dr. Jacoby Carter, Richard Day, Dr. Clint Jeske, and Chad Case

Armadillo

A



Nine-Banded Armadillo
(*Dasypus novemcinctus*)

Learn More About the Armadillo

- Armadillos have nine connected moveable plates along their backs. They have a large shoulder shield plate in the front and a smaller hip plate across the back of their body.
- Armadillos are about the size of a large house cat. Their head is pointed and the tail is long with twelve plated rings.
- Armadillos are omnivorous, nocturnal mammals. They generally come out at night to eat insects, other invertebrates and plants.
- Armadillos dig dens near trees and shrubs or create above ground nests made of leaves or grasses.
- Armadillos have identical quadruplets (clones) when they bear young.
- Armadillos are used in leprosy research as they are known to carry leprosy.

Mammal

Bat

B



Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat (*Plecotus rafinesquii*)

Learn More About Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat

- Bats are the only flying mammals. The wings of a bat are made of bones like those bones in our arms and hands. The long-arm bones and extra-long finger bones are covered with skin. This double layer of skin is called a membrane, and it is so thin that you can see light through it.

- Bats are nocturnal. They eat insects that fly at night.

- Bats use echolocation to catch insects and to avoid objects as they fly. Echolocation is a sensory system in bats that allows them to send out sound waves using their mouths and noses. When the sound hits an object, an echo comes back, and from this a bat can tell the size, shape, and location of the object.

- Rafinesque's Big-eared bat historically dwelled and foraged in and around great cypress swamps. As these swamp-lands are drained or cut down, the bats move their roosts into old buildings or attics.

In 1992, Rafinesque's Big-eared bat was listed as a species of concern. This species is becoming very scarce, especially in the northern parts of its range, and is considered extirpated in Indiana.

Mammal

Bison

B



American Bison
(*Bison bison*)

Learn More About the Bison

- Bison are herbivorous. They eat a variety of grasses.
- They are larger than cows and covered with long wooly hair.
- At one time, bison occurred widely in the Louisiana wetlands and prairies.
- Bison were hunted for meat and hides until they completely disappeared from this habitat.
- When an organism disappears from its natural habitat it said to be an extirpated species.
- Today, bison can be found in the Great Plains of the U.S.

Mammal

Black Bear

B



Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*)

Learn More About the Black Bear

- Black bears are the largest land mammal in Louisiana. Adult bears are approximately three to six feet from nose to tail and weigh between 150 and 500 pounds.
- Black bears prefer to live in wooded areas. They build dens in hollow trees or on the ground in brush piles or thickets.
- Bears are omnivorous, which means they prefer to eat nuts, acorns, fruit, insects and greens. However, bears will eat meat when it's available.
- Black bears have large brains and are considered an intelligent mammal.
- Black bears hibernate or sleep for weeks or months without eating, drinking, urinating or defecating.

In 1992, the Louisiana black bear was classified as a threatened species.

Mammal

Bobcat

B



Bobcat
(Lynx rufus)

Learn More About the Bobcat

- Bobcats are larger than a house cat, but smaller than a cougar. The tail of a bobcat is short, only four to five inches long. Bobcats are brown with black stripes or spots. On each side of the face of a bobcat are tufts of white fur.
- Bobcats live in areas with lots of woody plants. They make dens in hollow trees or brush.
- Bobcats are carnivorous. This means they eat meat like squirrels, mice, rats, opossums, birds and even deer.
- Bobcats are also called "wildcats."

Mammal

Coyote

C



Coyote
(*Canis latrans*)

Learn More About the Coyote

- Coyotes are about the size of a large dog. They are light gray in color and have a bushy tail.
- Coyotes live in forests, open fields, and marshy areas.
- Coyotes make large dens in hollow logs, abandoned dens, and dense plant areas.
- Coyotes are omnivorous. They eat smaller vertebrates (rabbits, mice, rats, birds, reptiles, and amphibians) and plant material (fruit, seeds, and berries).
- Coyotes are known for their howls, barks, and growls. Coyotes howl mostly at night during mating season.

Mammal

Deer

D



White Tail Deer
(*Odocoileus virginianus*)

Learn More About the Deer

- White tail deer are smaller than a horse and can weigh between 100 - 350 pounds. They are brown in color with a white belly.
- Male deer, called bucks, grow antlers each year. Antlers begin to grow in the spring. In January, their antlers fall off. With each passing year, the male antlers grow larger with more points. Antlers grow at a rate of one to two inches per week.
- White tail deer live in forested areas and marsh.
- Deer are herbivorous. They feed on leaves, stems, shoots, and acorns. They also eat food grown by humans including fruit, mushrooms, corn, and soybeans.
- Each hoof (foot) of a white tail deer is separated into two sections.

When a deer is scared it will raise its tail and the white fur on the underside of the tail acts as a warning flag for other deer.

Mammal

Dolphin

D



Bottle-nosed Dolphin
(*Tursiops truncatus*)

Learn More About the Dolphin

- Bottle-nosed dolphins are aquatic mammals. They are six to twelve feet long and weigh between 300 and 1000 pounds. Dolphins have a curved-back fin on the back of a dolphin.
- Bottle-nosed dolphins are grey on the top and white on the belly. They breathe through a single blowhole on the top side. They also have a pointed nose or beak.
- Bottle-nosed dolphins live in saltwater near the shore and in inland bays and estuaries with low salinity.
- Dolphins eat fish, shrimp, crabs, and squid.
- Dolphins live in small groups called pods. Sometimes these small pods come together forming super pods which can be from several 100's to 1000's.
- Dolphins use echolocation to locate objects. In echolocation, dolphins send out sound waves. When the sound hits an object an echo comes back to tell the size, shape, and location of the object.

Mammal

Fox

F



Gray Fox
(*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*)

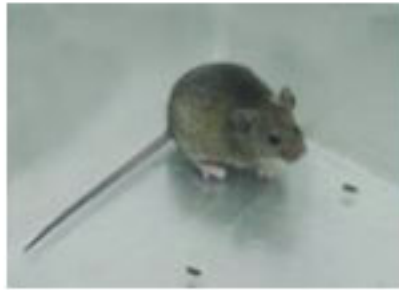
Learn More About the Gray Fox

- Gray foxes are about the size of a small to medium sized dog. They are gray in color and have pointed ears.
- Gray foxes live in forests and wooded flood plains. They make their dens underground or in hollow logs.
- Gray foxes are omnivorous. They primarily eat rabbits, mice, and rats. They will also eat eggs, insects, birds, fruit, acorns, and berries.
- Gray foxes are also so good at climbing trees that they are sometimes called "tree foxes." They climb trees to catch prey and escape from predators.

Mammal

Mouse

M



House Mouse
(*Mus musculus*)

Learn More About the Mouse

- House mice are small rodents that weigh between $\frac{1}{2}$ and one ounce and are less than six inches in length, from the nose to the base of the tail.
- House mice are brown in color and have a long scaly tail.
- The house mouse is an introduced (non-native) species. It was brought over to the United States on ships from Europe and Asia.
- House mice live in almost every environment associated with humans. They live in homes, warehouse, offices, farm buildings, garbage dumps and other places where people work, play, and live.
- Mice are omnivores. They prefer to eat grains and vegetable products, but they will make a meal out of anything edible, even pet food.
- Mice are known to carry many diseases.

Mammal

Nutria

N



Nutria
(*Myocaster coypus*)

Learn More About the Nutria

- Nutria are big aquatic rodents with large, orange front teeth.
- Nutria weigh between ten and twenty pounds and are approximately 30 inches long.
- Nutria prefer to live in freshwater to brackish marshes but are able to live in other wetland environments.
- Nutria are herbivorous. They eat wetlands plants and can cause severe damage to the Louisiana wetlands.
- Nutria are an invasive, or non-native, species to Louisiana and North America. They were brought to Louisiana from South America in the 1930s.
- The only natural predators of the adult nutria in Louisiana are the alligator and the coyote.

Mammal

Opossum

O



Virginia Opossum
(*Didelphis virginiana*)

Learn More About the Opossum

- Opossums are called marsupials, or pouched mammals. Females have a pouch on the belly or abdomen, where the young are protected and can nurse.
- Opossums are about the size of a house cat when they are full grown. The average weight is 7 pounds and the average length is 25 to 30 inches.
- Opossums have a long prehensile tail, which can be used like a tail, and their paws are shaped similar to human hands.
- Opossums are omnivorous eating almost any animal or plant food.
- When opossums are extremely scared, they will pretend to be dead. This is often called "playing 'possum."

Mammal

Otter



River Otter
(*Lutra canadensis*)

Learn More About the Otter

- River otters are sleek water loving mammals related to weasels . They are brown in color and have a long muscular tail.
- River otters weigh between fifteen and thirty pounds and can be up to three feet long.
- River otters prefer freshwater habitats near rivers, lakes, ponds, swamps, marshes and bayous. They live in underground dens at the roots of trees.
- River otters are carnivores. They eat mostly fish but will also eat frogs, salamanders, birds, eggs and shellfish.
- River otters are playful. They swim, slide, and dive in waterways with other otters.

O

Mammal

Rabbit

R



Swamp Rabbit
(*Sylvilagus aquaticus*)

Learn More About the Swamp Rabbit

- Swamp rabbits are brown with many black hairs on their backs and white fur on their bellies. They have very large back feet and long ears. They also have a short furry tail.
- When fully grown, swamp rabbits weigh between four and six pounds and are approximately 20 inches long.
- Swamp rabbits eat grasses, shrubs, aquatic vegetation and even sugar cane.
- Their nests are on high ground and lined with their own rabbit fur, leaves and grasses.
- Swamp rabbits live in swamps and other wet environments like flood plains and near rivers and bayous.

Mammal

Raccoon

R



Raccoon
(Procyon lotor)

Learn More About the Raccoon

- Raccoons are about the size of a small to medium sized dog. Raccoons have a white face with a black mask around their eyes. Raccoons also have a bushy tail with rings. Raccoons can vary in color but are generally gray, brown, and black.
- Raccoons prefer to live in forests that have hollow trees and waterways.
- Raccoons are omnivorous eating both plants and animals. They eat almost anything like nuts, berries, acorns, grasshoppers, dragonflies, frogs and bird eggs. When raccoons live in towns and cities, they will even dig in garbage cans for food.
- Raccoons may dunk food in water before they eat it.
- Raccoons' paws look much like human hands.

Mammal

Rat

R



Marsh Rice Rat
(*Oryzomys palustris*)

Learn More About Marsh Rats

- The body and tail of a marsh rat are grayish brown on top and whitish on the bottom. They have long tails and medium-sized eyes and ears.
- Marsh rats usually weigh one to three ounces and are less than twelve inches long.
- While these rats prefer to live in marshes and wet meadows, they can also make their habitats in grasses and sedges.
- The marsh rice rat swims under water with ease, eating the tender parts of aquatic plants.
- Newborn marsh rice rats are naked, blind, and helpless. Most marsh rats live for only one year.
- Barn owls, marsh hawks, minks, raccoons, foxes, skunks and cottonmouth snakes are some of the predators that eat marsh rice rats.

Mammal

Skunk

S



Striped Skunk
(*Mephitis mephitis*)

Learn More About the Skunk

- Striped skunks are about the size of a large house cat. They are all black and white. Most skunks have prominent white stripes while others have spots.
- Skunks live in grassy areas, forest edges, and neighborhoods. They are usually found near water.
- Skunks are omnivorous. They eat various plants, insects, grubs, small mammals like mice, and the eggs of birds and amphibians.
- Skunks have a unique ability to defend themselves. Skunks can lift their tails and spray a smelly yellowish musk ten to fifteen feet away. The smell is so strong that humans can identify it from up to a mile away.

Mammal

Squirrel

S



Gray Squirrel
(Sciurus carolinensis)

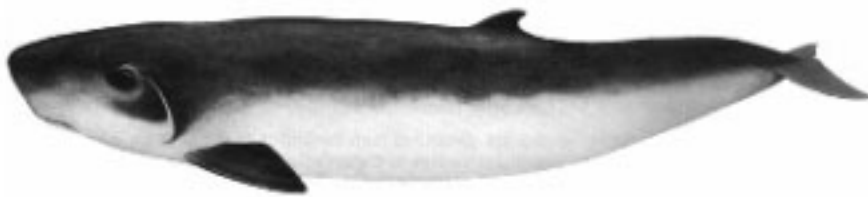
Learn More About the Gray Squirrel

- Gray squirrels have long bushy tails and a large pair of front teeth. The back of the squirrel is brown and the belly is white.
- Squirrels usually weigh about one pound and can grow to about twenty inches long.
- Gray squirrels live in wooded areas like forests but can also be found in neighborhoods.
- These squirrels make their nests in hollow trees or build leafy nests near the tops of trees.
- Gray squirrels prefer to eat acorns and other nuts like pecans. They also eat fruits, berries and insects.
- Gray squirrels often make a noise that sounds like an unusual small bark.

Mammal

Whale

W



Pygmy Sperm Whale
(*Kogia breviceps*)

Learn More About the Whale

- Pigmy sperm whales are between eight and twelve feet long and weight 600 pounds or more. They breathe through a blowhole in the top of their heads. These whales have teeth on their lower jaw and three stomachs.
- Pigmy sperm whales are slow moving and avoid human contact. When startled a whale may eject a reddish brown fluid in order to camouflage its retreat.
- Pigmy sperm whales are carnivorous. They eat shrimp, fish, squid, and crabs.
- Pigmy sperm whales use echolocation. In echolocation, whales send out sound waves. When the sound hits an object an echo comes back to tell the size, shape, and location of the object.
- Pigmy sperm whales live in the deep warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico in the fall and winter.

Mammal