Arizona Wildlife
Mammals

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The mammals included in this booklet represent a sample of the 138 species found in Arizona (Hoffmeister, 1986).

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For more information:

Mammals of Arizona, by Hoffmeister

Mammals of the Southwestern United States and Northwestern Mexico, by Cockrum and Petryszyn

Vertebrates of Arizona, by Lowe

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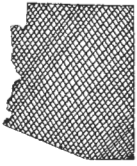
Badger: *Taxidea taxus*

Spanish name: tejón; tlalcoyote; juin

Description: The body is squat, flat and wide, and is covered with dense, grayish-brown fur with long, dark guard hairs. The head is striped black and white. The tail is short. The legs are short and powerful, with very long, curved front claws. May weigh up to 30 pounds.

Range: Statewide



Habitat: Prefers open grasslands, scrub, and deserts.

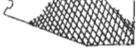
Niche: A carnivore that uses its powerful front legs and claws to dig out rodents. Primarily nocturnal during the summer, but may be active any time during the rest of the year.

Life History: Litters of 3-5 young are born in spring and early summer. Life span is about 13 years.

Comments: Badgers have long hair and loose skin, making it difficult for predators to get a good grip, and allowing the badger to easily turn and fight.

Lesser Long-nosed Bat: *Leptonycteris curasoae*
Spanish name: murciélago

Description: One of Arizona's three leaf-nosed bats, it has large eyes, a leaf-like flap of skin at the base of a relatively long nose, small ears, and no visible tail. It is grayish to reddish above and brown below. Weight averages 0.4 ounces, body length is 2.5 to 3 inches, and wingspan averages 14 inches.



Range: From the Picacho Mountains south and west to the Agua Dulces, and south and east to the Chiricahuas and into Mexico.

Habitat: April-July, females are found in areas with flowering saguaros and organ pipe cacti below 3,500 feet. In July they move up to 5,500 feet to semidesert grassland and lower oak woodland to forage on agave blossoms.

Niche: A nocturnal nectar-feeder that pollinates agaves and columnar cacti such as saguaros and organ pipes.

Life History: Pregnant females arrive in Arizona from Mexico in mid-April. Young are born in May/June, and can fly by the end of August.

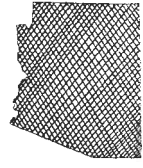
Comments: Listed as endangered in 1988 under the Endangered Species Act. This species collects in large roosts in mines and caves. Roost disturbance, habitat loss, and over-harvest of agaves are concerns for this bat.

Mexican Free-tailed Bat: *Tadarida brasiliensis*

Spanish name: murciélago

Description: A relatively small bat with brown fur and round ears, this bat belongs to a group of bats, which has an extended tail beyond the tail membrane and long hairs on its feet. Body length is 2 to 2 ½ inches and wingspan averages 11 ½ to 13 inches.

Range: Statewide



Habitat: Most habitat types. Roosts in caves, abandoned mines, buildings, and bridges. One of the most common inhabitants of urban structures.

Niche: A nocturnal insect-eater that can fly up to 65 miles per hour in search of its favorite food – moths, which they capture on the wing.

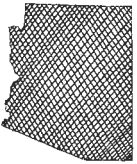
Life History: Mating occurs in February and March. Following an 11- to 12-week gestation period, females give birth to one young in a maternity colony. Young develop rapidly and fly in about five weeks.

Comments: Congregates in large colonies, which may contain millions of bats. Mexican free-tailed bats travel up to 800 miles during their biannual Mexico-Arizona migration. Some individuals remain in Arizona year-round.

Pallid Bat: *Antrozous pallidus*
Spanish name: murciélago

Description: This bat has large ears and eyes, a distinctive pig-like snout, and pale fur that is creamy white below and light yellow with darker tips above. Adults weigh about 1 ounce, have a wingspan of 14 to 15 inches, and a body length of 2 ½ to 3 inches.

Range: Statewide



Habitat: Usually found in desert scrub habitat, less often in forested oak and pine regions. Prefer rocky outcrops. Rarely found above 6,000 feet.

Niche: A nocturnal insect-eater that flies close to the ground listening for the low frequency sounds made by the ground-dwelling insects, centipedes, and scorpions on which it feeds. Preyed upon by hawks, owls, snakes, and other predators.

Life History: Mating occurs throughout the winter months. Young are born in nursery colonies in the spring, all at about the same time.

Comments: Roosts in crevices, buildings, bridges, and abandoned mines. Odor-producing glands on the muzzle give pallid bats a "skunk-like" scent.

Black Bear: *Ursus americanus*

Spanish name: oso negro

Description: Large and heavily built, may reach 3 ½ feet in height and 5 feet in length. Males weigh about 275 pounds and females about 150 pounds. Color may vary from black to light tans and reddish-browns. Black bear have small, pointed heads and small eyes.

Range: Mountain ranges of the north, east, and southeastern parts of the state, usually above 5,000 feet.

Habitat: Dense forest, chaparral, oak-grasslands, and deep cool canyons. Occasionally comes into the lower desert to feed on cactus fruit or to cross from one mountain range to another.

Niche: A large omnivore that eats a wide variety of plant and animal material, including carrion. Can be a predator on fawns, young elk, javelina, and livestock. Has no major predators.

Life History: Cubs are born in early spring, while the female is hibernating. Females produce litters of 1 or 2 cubs every other year. Cubs weigh about ½ pound at birth. Life span is 30 years or more.

Comments: Black bears are common, but shy and seldom seen.

Beaver: *Castor canadensis*

Spanish name: castor; nutria

Description: The largest rodent in North America, weighing up to 80 pounds. Beaver fur is dense, fine and rich brown in color. Hind feet are webbed and the tail is broad, flat and hairless. They can reach 3-4 feet in length and 15 inches in height.

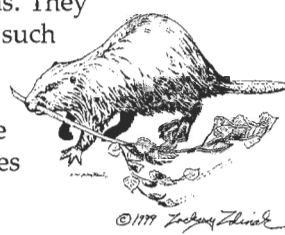
Range: Most major rivers and streams of the state.

Habitat: Mountain and desert streams or rivers having cottonwood, willow, or aspen nearby.

Niche: An aquatic herbivore, feeding almost exclusively on the bark of trees. Semi-nocturnal. Beaver are preyed upon by larger carnivores.

Life History: Following a four-month gestation period a litter of 1-4 kits are born in late spring or early summer. Life span may be 10-12 years.

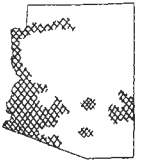
Comments: Beavers change the environment to suit their needs by constructing dams. They are found in many desert rivers such as the Salt, Verde, Colorado, and Gila. Formerly found in the Santa Cruz, and others. They are also found in high mountain lakes and streams.



Desert Bighorn Sheep: *Ovis canadensis*

Spanish name: borrego cimarron

Description: A large, chunky, hoofed animal with horns. Adult males (rams) have massive, curling horns; female and sub-adult horns are slender and curving. Upper body is grayish-brown; the large rump patch, insides of legs and underparts are creamy-white. Desert sheep are approximately the same size as mule deer.



Range: Colorado River basin from the Utah border to Mexico and interior mountains of the southwest and south-central deserts.

Habitat: Remote mountain ranges, rough canyons and harshest deserts of Arizona.

Niche: A large herbivore. Feeds on grasses and forbs with extensive use of some desert shrubs and trees. Preyed upon by large predators. Lambs may be preyed upon by golden eagles.

Life History: Lambs, usually singles, are born in midspring.

Comments: Sheep suffered heavily from human depredation in early days and from diseases spread by livestock. Feral burros can compete for limited resources in sheep habitat.

Bison: *Bison bison*

Spanish name: búfalo

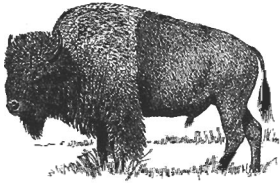
Description: A large member of the bovine family, which is the same as domestic cows, with a heavy head, short, curved horns, short neck and high, humped shoulders. The forequarters are covered with dense, woolly fur. Bison may stand over 6 feet tall at the shoulders and weigh up to 2,500 pounds.

Range: Not historically native to Arizona, now 250 are found in Arizona on two ranches – House Rock, on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, and Raymond Ranch, east of Flagstaff.

Habitat: A plains-grasslands animal, which prefers open country. In Arizona it inhabits sagebrush-grasslands edged by pinyon-juniper forest.

Niche: The largest herbivore in America. In Arizona there has apparently been no niche for such a large herbivore since prehistoric times.

Life History: Calves, usually singles, are born mostly in late spring and early summer. Life span in the wild averages 25 years.



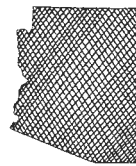
Comments: The American bison, reduced from 60 million to less than 1,000 by 1900, now number more than 20,000.

Bobcat: *Felis rufus*

Spanish name: gato montés; lince

Description: A medium-sized cat, 20-30 inches in height, 26-36 inches in length and weighing 15-40 pounds. Yellowish-brown to gray. Underparts white, with black spots. Short tail, tufted ears.

Range: Statewide



Habitat: Rocky breaks and canyons. Brush areas and forest or desert having good cover. Found in all habitats of Arizona.

Niche: A semi-nocturnal predator, which feeds on rodents, birds, and other small animals. Mature bobcats can prey on deer or javelina. Adults are occasionally preyed upon by mountain lion. Kittens may be taken by coyotes or lions.

Life History: Litters of 2-3 kittens are born in rocky dens during April and May.

Comments: The bobcat is secretive and seldom seen, but is quite common in our state.

Coati: *Nasua nasua*

Spanish name: tejón; pistote; chulo

Description: A long, slender animal with a long, banded tail, which is carried erect. Coatis have short legs and a long, pointed snout. They are grizzled-brown to yellowish-brown in color, lighter under the chin and throat. There is a dark mask across the eyes. May weigh more than 20 pounds and be up to 4 feet in length (including tail). Up to 10 inches in height.

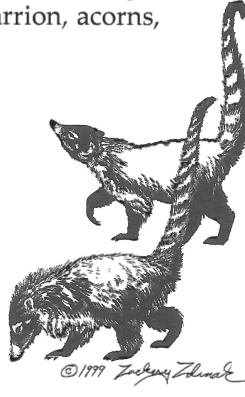
Range: Southern and eastern parts of the state.

Habitat: Oak-grasslands, higher deserts and canyons.

Niche: An omnivore, which feeds on a wide variety of plants and animals including lizards, bird eggs, small rodents, carrion, acorns, fruits, and insects.

Life History: Litters of 4-6 are born in summer.

Comments: A species that is apparently extending its range north out of Mexico. Travels in groups of up to 40 individuals and will defend itself vigorously when threatened by predators such as mountain lion.



Desert Cottontail: *Sylvilagus audubonii*
Spanish name: conejo; conejo de monte

Description: A small rabbit distinguished by its "cottontail"– a distinctive white tail, like a powder puff. Gray to brownish in color. Moderately long ears and large eyes placed on the sides of the head.

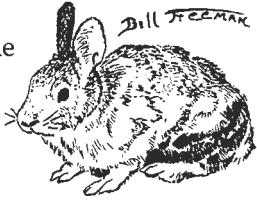
Range: Statewide

Habitat: Three subspecies have evolved to fit almost every area and type of Arizona habitat. From desert to pine forest; from grassland to chaparral.

Niche: A small herbivore, mostly diurnal, which feeds on grasses, weeds and a wide variety of small plants. A prey species for almost every predator, it is very important in the food chains of these predators.

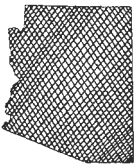
Life History: Females may produce 3-5 litters per year, averaging 4-5 young per litter. Average life span is about 2 years.

Comments: In spite of intense predation, the cottontail holds its own population-wise. In years with good rainfall and lush vegetation, litters may be large. In dry years, litters may be smaller. Cottontails demonstrate the fact that predators seldom control prey; prey species control predator numbers.



Coyote: *Canis latrans*
Spanish name: coyote

Description: Very dog-like, with pointed muzzle and sharp, erect ears. The fur is thick, fairly long and coarse, grayish or tawny; underparts lighter. The bushy tail is often tipped with black. Height: 18-24 inches, length: 32-40 inches, weight: 20-40 pounds.



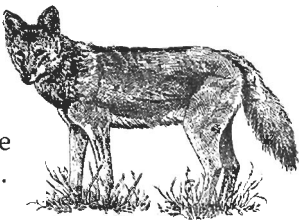
Range: Statewide

Habitat: Perhaps the most adaptable animal in the state. Lives in the driest deserts, pine forests, and within city limits.

Niche: A predator that preys on nearly every prey species – but who also eats a wide variety of plant and insect material, scavenges garbage cans, and readily eats carrion. Coyotes are occasionally preyed upon by lions.

Life History: An average litter contains 4-5 pups, but like most dogs, can have many more. Pups are born in spring.

Comments: Coyotes have more than held their own despite extreme pressure from humans in the past. Now nearly every state has a coyote population. History tells us there were no coyotes east of the Mississippi River 200 years ago.



Mule Deer: *Odocoileus hemionus*

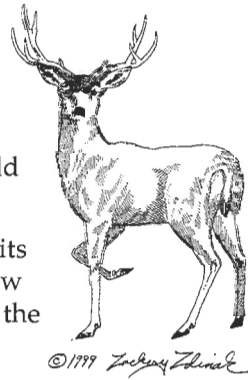
Spanish names: venado bura; bura; venado; venado mula

Description: A large deer that may weigh more than 200 pounds. The summer coat varies from yellowish to reddish; winter coat is dark gray. Insides of legs, underparts and rump are whitish. The short, stumpy tail is tipped with black. Males (bucks) have branched or forked antlers.

Range: Most of the state, from the highest mountains to the low desert plains.

Habitat: Forest, chaparral and desert scrub communities.

Niche: A large herbivore whose diet varies depending on season, vegetative type where it lives, and climatic conditions. Deer are preyed upon by large predators, particularly mountain lions.



Life History: Fawns, usually twins, are born in midsummer. Deer may live to 10 years in the wild but average only 3 to 3 ½ years.

Comments: This deer is named for its large ears. Bucks grow and shed new antlers annually. The main forks of the antlers are equally branched.

White-tailed Deer: *Odocoileus virginianus couesii*

Spanish name: venado; venado salton; venado cola blanca

Description: Much smaller than the mule deer. Pale gray in color, with white underparts. The large, triangular tail is snowy-white underneath. Males (bucks) have antlers, which do not branch or fork; antler tines rise from a main beam.

Range: Most common in the southeastern quarter of the state, but range extends through foothills and forests of the Mogollon Rim and White Mountains.

Habitat: Desert, chaparral, and oak-grasslands. Canyons of the Rim and mountain country.

Niche: A medium-large herbivore, more a browser than a grazer. Prefers shrubs, forbs and trees but utilizes a wide variety of plants. Preyed upon by coyote, bobcat, and lion.

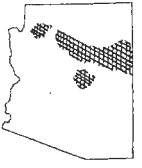
Life History: Fawns, usually twins, are born in early to midsummer.

Comments: A shy, alert deer, which commonly "flags" its large, white tail and runs away when frightened. Mule deer usually "bounce" away. Whitetail are a popular hunted big game species.

Elk: *Cervus elaphus*

Spanish name: alce; ante

Description: The largest member of the deer family in Arizona. The head and shoulders are dark brown, the legs are very dark, the body is brownish to creamy tan with a whitish rump patch and short, stubby tail. Males (bulls) have very large antlers, with tines rising from one main beam. Bulls may be 5 feet in height at the shoulder, and weigh up to 1,000 lbs.

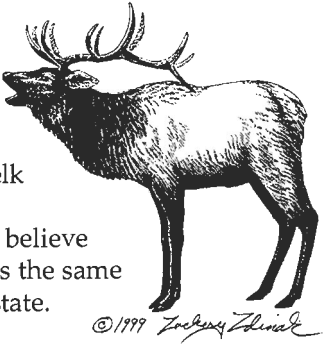


Range: Timbered, mountainous areas of the northern half of the state.

Habitat: Forest and chaparral; prefers open, grassy meadows for feeding; heavy timber and deep canyons for shelter.

Niche: The largest native herbivore, elk prefer grazing but do utilize browse plants. They are prey to mountain lions. Bear and coyote may prey upon calves.

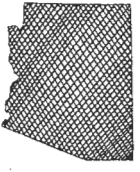
Life History: Single calves weighing 25-40 pounds are born in May or June and may live to 15 years in the wild.



Comments: Arizona's native elk (Merriam's) is now extinct. However, there are some who believe the original elk of Arizona was the same species as those north of our state.

Gray Fox: *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*
Spanish name: zorra gris

Description: A slender, medium-sized fox; grizzled gray with a dark face, reddish-brown stripe down the back and a bushy tail with a black stripe extending its length. Height to about 15 inches, length (with tail) about 40 inches, weight up to 10 pounds.



Range: Most of the state.

Habitat: Adapted to most Arizona environments. Prefers areas with brushy or rocky shelter.

Niche: A small omnivore that eats rodents, lizards, birds and a wide variety of fruits, nuts, berries, insects, and carrion. Semi-nocturnal. Preyed upon by larger predators and great horned owls.

Life History: Three to seven kits are born in late spring. Life span is about 5 years.

Comments: The most common fox in Arizona. It is often mistaken for the smaller kit fox. The distinguishing mark is the dark stripe extending the length of the tail. This fox also is known to climb trees.

Kit Fox: *Vulpes macrotis*

Spanish name: zorra norteña

Description: A small, sandy to gray colored fox with very large ears. Bushy tail has a black tip. Very slender in appearance. Height to 12 inches, length to about 3 feet, weight: 4-5 pounds.

Range: Desert scrub and desert grasslands of Arizona.

Habitat: A real desert fox – preferring sandy, sparsely vegetated deserts. Often found in creosote bush communities.

Niche: A nocturnal predator on small mammals such as kangaroo rats and pocket mice. Also feeds on birds, eggs, reptiles, insects, and some vegetation. Preyed upon by larger carnivores and great horned owls.

Life History: Litters of 2-6 are born in midspring.

Comment: The San Joaquin Kit fox – a subspecies of *Vulpes macrotis*, is currently endangered. This is a very localized population in California.

Round-tailed Ground Squirrel: *Spermophilus tereticaudus*

Spanish name: ardilla de tierra; juancito

Description: A small rodent, 8-10 ½ inches in length. Fur is a cinnamon color, grayish cast above, lighter on the belly. Tail is slender, not bushy. Weight: 5-6 ½ ounces.

Range: Southwestern Arizona

Habitat: Flat sandy desert areas and creosote scrub.

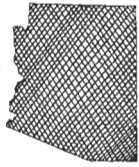
Niche: A small herbivore, most active morning and evening. Seeds, other plant parts and insects are chief foods.

Life History: Litters of 3-9 young, depending on rainfall and vegetation, are born in midspring.

Comments: Smaller than their cousin the prairie dog, round-tailed ground squirrels are not often seen above ground October-December. Hibernate in burrows during the winter, but may emerge on bright, warm days.

Jackrabbit: Blacktailed: *Lepus californicus*
Antelope: *Lepus alleni*
Spanish name: liebre

Description: Blacktailed: A large hare with very long, black-tipped ears and long, powerful hind legs. Usually gray with a black tail and white underparts. Weight: 5-8 pounds. Antelope: A large hare with ears even larger than the blacktailed jackrabbit. Ears do not have black tips. Gray, with white underparts and white patches on the sides, which "flash" as it runs. Weight: 6-8 pounds.



Range: Blacktailed: Statewide. Allen's: Central one-third of southern Arizona.

Habitat: Blacktailed: Adapted to most environments of the state, but prefers open, semi-shrubby areas. Allen's: Open grassland and desert scrub.

Niche: Both species are herbivores, preyed upon by all larger predators including hawks, eagles, and coyotes.

Life History: Jackrabbit young are born furred, in contrast to the naked cottontail young. Two young are born in each of about four litters per year.

Comments: Both jackrabbits are found in some areas of south-central Arizona.

Jaguar: *Felis onca*

Spanish name: jaguar; tigre

Description: A large, spotted cat; yellow-orange in color with black spots and rosettes. Much heavier and stockier than the mountain lion; it may weigh over 200 pounds.

Range: Occasionally ranges north out of Mexico into the southeastern third of the state. Historically as far north as the Grand Canyon.

Habitat: Major river drainages, high deserts and forested mountains. Prefers wetter areas; jaguars enjoy water and swim well.

Niche: The largest cat in North America, this carnivore feeds on deer, javelina, and occasionally on livestock.

Life History: Litters of 2 to 4 cubs are born in the months of April and May, probably in alternate years. Jaguars have lived 22 years in captivity.

Comments: This great, spotted cat was once a resident, but is now only a visitor to our state. Apparently males occasionally wander north out of Mexico.

Javelina: *Pecari tajacu*

Spanish name: jabali; coche javelina

Description: A pig-like animal with a long snout, thick neck, and compact body. Short legs, small hooves, and very short tail. Grizzled black and gray hair is long and coarse. Height: 20 inches, length: 36 inches, weight: 25-60 pounds. Lighter markings over shoulders gives name "collared" peccary.

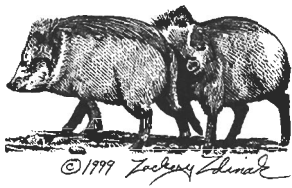
Range: Foothills and desert valleys of southeast and south-central Arizona. Ranges northward following the Verde River and Tonto Creek drainages and occasionally in higher elevations.

Habitat: Sonoran desert, oak-grasslands, and chaparral vegetative types. Desert washes and stream bottoms.

Niche: A medium-sized herbivore that eats a variety of plant materials such as tubers, forbs, prickly pear, agave, acorns, and mesquite beans. Preyed upon by large predators, including the golden eagle.

Life History: One and occasionally two piglets or reds are born at almost any time of the year, but mostly spring and summer.

Comments: Javelina are usually found in herds of up to 40 animals. Has a reputation for ferocity, which is not deserved. A popular hunted big game species.



Kangaroo Rat: *Dipodomys*

Spanish name: rata kanguro

Description: A small desert rat with an exceptionally long, tufted tail. The hind legs are enlarged (kangaroo-like). The front legs are much smaller. Usually tannish in color, with white or lighter tan underneath. Kangaroo rats have external, fur-lined cheek pouches.

Range: Various subspecies have adapted to most Arizona habitats except coniferous forests.

Habitat: Arid and semi-arid lands. Most common in sandy deserts.

Niche: A small, nocturnal seed-eater which is capable of living without ever drinking water. It manufactures water from the dry seeds and vegetation it eats. Also eats some insects such as grasshoppers. Preyed upon by all desert predators – rattlesnakes, owls, foxes, coyotes, etc.

Life History: Young are born from early spring through late summer. Litters of 2-3 may be born at several periods during the year. May live 2-3 years.

Comments: The kangaroo rat is well adapted to desert life. Its habit of hopping on its hind legs and using the long tail for balance gives the kangaroo rat its name.

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Long-tailed Weasel: *Mustela frenata*

Spanish name: comadreja; sabin; oncita; armiño

Description: A very small animal, 8-10 inches in length, with a 4-6 inch tail. Weighs about one-half pound. It has a long, slender body, with a long neck. The head is only slightly larger than the neck. Brownish, with light markings on the face, yellowish-white underparts and a black tip on the tail. Weasels in northern areas may turn white in winter – they are then called ermine.

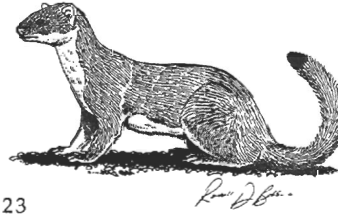
Range: High mountain areas of the Mogollon Rim, White Mountains, Chuska Mountains and southeastern Arizona.

Habitat: Forests and streams or river bottom areas.

Niche: A semi-nocturnal predator, which preys on almost anything from birds, mice, rats, rabbits, and squirrels. Hawks, owls, domestic cats, and larger predators prey upon it.

Life History: One to nine young are born in midspring.

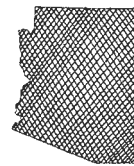
Comments: Noted as an excellent, fearless hunter capable of killing prey much larger than itself. Common, but seldom seen.



Mountain Lion: *Felis concolor*

Spanish name: leon; montés; puma

Description: A very large, slender cat with a small head and rounded ears; up to 7-8 feet tip-to-tip and can weigh well over 150 pounds. Lions are tannish or grayish in color, with light undersides. The long tail has a black tip.



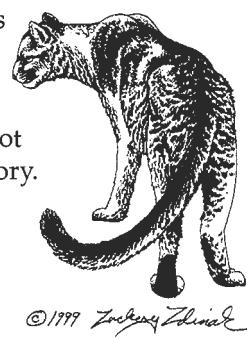
Range: Statewide, wherever deer are found. Occasionally crosses from range to range through non-deer habitat.

Habitat: Mostly a resident of desert or forest mountain ranges with rough canyons and rocky escarpments. Found in chaparral, forest, and desert scrub.

Niche: A large carnivore that preys on deer, javelina, bighorn sheep, elk, livestock, porcupines, birds, and rodents.

Life History: One litter of 1-4 kittens is born in spring. Lions may live to 15 years in the wild.

Comments: Males will kill kittens not their own found within their territory. Arizona has one of the largest lion populations of any state.



Muskrat: *Ondatra zibethicus*

Spanish name: rata almizclera

Description: A stocky, heavily furred rodent – somewhat like a beaver, but smaller. Muskrats have small ears and eyes, short legs and a long, bare tail. The hind feet are partially webbed and larger than the front feet. The fur is gray, with blackish-brown or rusty guard hairs. May be nearly white on throat and belly.
Length: 16-25 inches, including tail.
Weight: 2-4 pounds.

Range: Rivers, streams, and marshy areas throughout the state. Commonly found in irrigation canals.

Habitat: Rivers, lakes, streams, and canals – wherever water plants are present. Marshy areas, with cattails, preferred.

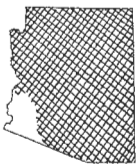
Niche: An aquatic herbivore, which feeds largely on cattails and other marsh plants. Muskrats also feed on crayfish, clams, salamanders, and carrion. Most predators, even large fish, sometimes prey on young muskrats.

Life History: 1-3 litters are born each year, with 1-11 kits per litter.

Comments: Muskrats construct dome-shaped dens of vegetation and mud that rise above the water, with an underwater entrance.

Porcupine: *Erethizon dorsatum*
Spanish name: puerco espín

Description: A large rodent with small head, ears, and eyes. The body is covered with soft, woolly hair, with long glistening guard hairs. The tail and back are liberally covered with long, black-tipped quills. Porcupines have long chisel teeth and may weigh up to 35 pounds.



Range: Most of Arizona, even some desert areas, with the exception of the southwestern quarter.

Habitat: Wide ranging; apparently the main habitat requirement is the availability of woody vegetation.

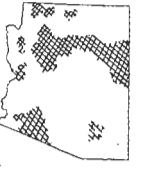
Niche: A medium-sized herbivore that feeds mostly on woody plants. Seldom preyed upon by any predators but the mountain lion and great horned owl.

Life History: Single young are born in spring. Life span is 7-8 years.

Comments: Quills cannot be "thrown," but are "slapped" into an attacker by a rapid swing of the tail. A favorite desert food is the ocotillo.

Pronghorn or Antelope: *Antilocapra americana*
Spanish name: berrendo

Description: A deer-sized animal with very slender legs, chunky body, and long, pointed ears. Golden tan in color, with a prominent white rump patch that can be raised and "flashed," white underparts and white throat bands. The muzzle and horns are black. Males (bucks) have black jaw markings. Both sexes have horns, but the female's (doe's) are much smaller. Weight: 75-130 pounds; height: 3-3 ½ feet. It is not a true antelope.



Range: Prairie lands north of the Mogollon Rim, from the New Mexico border west into Mohave County and around Prescott. Smaller populations in the Arizona Strip and the southeast corner of the state. Arizona has remnant populations of the endangered Sonoran pronghorn, *Antilocapra americana sonoriensis* and the Chihuahuan pronghorn, *Antilocapra americana mexicana*. Small herds occur along the Mexican border south and west of Ajo.

Habitat: Prairie grasslands, semi-desert grasslands, open woodlands, hills, and mesas.

Niche: This herbivore feeds on weeds and shrubs. Coyote, bobcats, and lions are predators.

Life History: Fawns, usually twins, born late spring.

Raccoon: *Procyon lotor*

Spanish name: mapache; osito lavador

Description: A medium-sized mammal with thick, grayish-brown fur. The head is marked by a prominent black facemask. The tail is bushy with black rings. Raccoon front feet look and function like small hands.

Range: Most of the state, within range of water.

Habitat: Primarily river and stream bottoms, lakeshores, and swampy areas.

Niche: Raccoons are nocturnal omnivores, feeding largely on animal material, but readily using fruits, nuts, berries, corn, and other farm produce. Preyed upon by coyote, bobcat, lion, and great horned owl.

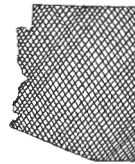
Life History: Litters of 2 to 7 young are usually born in spring.

Comments: One of the most adaptable animals of Arizona. Raccoons have learned to adapt to many human land uses such as farming, urbanization, and campgrounds.

Ringtail: *Bassariscus astutus*
Spanish name: cacomixtle

Description: A small, slender mammal with a small head, large ears and eyes, short legs, and a long, bushy, ringed tail. Brownish to grayish in color, pale underparts. The tail is blackish with white bands. Ringtails may reach 30 inches in length (including tail), 6 inches in height and weigh about 2 to 2 ½ pounds.

Range: Statewide



Habitat: A canyon dweller, living near water.

Niche: A small, nocturnal carnivore, which feeds on rodents, reptiles, insects, and birds. Larger predators, including the great horned owl, prey upon it.

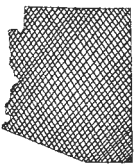
Life History: Litters of 2-4 are born in late spring and early summer. Ringtails live up to 8 years in captivity.

Comments: Often called the "ringtailed cat" – it is not a cat, but a member of the same family as the raccoon and coati. Another common name is "miner's cat" from its habit of taking up residence in buildings or mines, including miners' cabins – even when occupied by the miner.

Skunks: Striped: *Mephitis mephitis*
Spotted: *Spilogale gracilis*
Spanish name: zorillo; manchado

Description: Striped: About the size of a domestic cat; black body with narrow white stripe up the middle of the forehead. A broad white V extends from the shoulders to the hips. Spotted: One-third to one-half the size of the striped skunk. The body is black with four broken white markings along the neck, back and sides. The tail has a white tip.

Range: Mostly statewide for both species.



Habitat: River bottom and valley areas of the deserts and at almost every elevation in mountain ranges.

Niche: All skunks are omnivores, primarily nocturnal. They feed on insects, eggs, small rodents, lizards, nuts, fruits, and carrion. Skunks are preyed upon occasionally by most predators, chiefly by the great horned owl.

Life History: Young are born in early summer; 3-8 for the striped skunk and 1-4 for the spotted skunk.

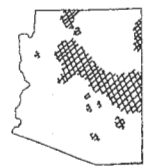
Comments: All skunks can spray an offensive liquid up to 15 feet.

spotted

striped

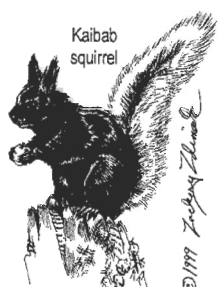
Squirrels: Abert's: *Sciurus aberti*
Kaibab: *Sciurus aberti kaibabensis*
Spanish name: ardilla arbórea; ardilla arborícola

Description: Abert's: A large, heavy-bodied tree squirrel with tufted ears and a long, bushy, mostly white or grayish tail. Dark grayish above with a broad, rusty-reddish stripe down the back. Underparts and feet are white. Kaibab: Similar to the Abert's except darker. Tail is all white. Underparts usually black instead of white.



Range: Abert's: Found in the forested areas of the Mogollon Rim to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, the White Mountains, the Chuska Mountains on the Navajo Reservation, and the Catalina and Graham Mountains of southern Arizona. Kaibab: A subspecies of the Abert's found only on the Kaibab plateau, north of the Grand Canyon. Recently introduced into high mountain areas west of the Kaibab. It is considered rare but not endangered.

Habitat: Coniferous forests.

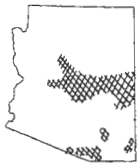


Niche: Squirrels are herbivorous rodents, which live in trees and are preyed upon by hawks and other predators when they go to the ground.

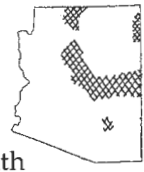
Life History: Litters of 4-5 are born from late spring to early fall.

Squirrels: Arizona gray: *Sciurus arizonensis*
Red: *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*, Spanish name: ardilla

Description: Arizona gray: A large tree squirrel with fairly large, rounded ears. Usually all gray except for underparts, which are white or pale gray. Red: A small tree squirrel, about one-half the size of the Gray. Reddish-brown with white underparts. Ears tufted. A nervous, alert, and noisy squirrel.



Range: Arizona gray: Deciduous forest areas in mountains of central, eastern and south-central Arizona. Streamside areas at lower elevations. Red: Coniferous forests of the White Mountains and Mogollon Plateau, the Chuska Mountains on the Navajo Reservation, and the Graham Mountains in southern Arizona.



Habitat: Arizona gray: Closely associated with walnut trees, usually stream and river bottoms. Red: Coniferous forests at higher elevations.

Niche: Squirrels are herbivorous rodents that live in trees and are preyed upon by hawks and other predators when they descend to the ground.

Life History:

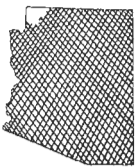
Red:
1-6 young, born in late spring.

Arizona gray:
2-6 young, born in early spring.

White-throated Wood Rat: *Neotoma albigula*

Spanish name: rata de bosque

Description: Brownish-gray above, white or grayish below. Tail is brownish-gray above, whitish below. Throat and feet are white. Length: 11-16 inches.



Range: Statewide except north and west of the Colorado River.

Habitat: Commonly found in areas of extensive cholla or prickly pear cactus, but occurs in a variety of habitats below the conifer belt. Frequently found in pinyon-juniper forests.

Niche: A small nocturnal herbivore that feeds on seeds and plant material. It is prey to most predators including snakes, owls, bobcats, and foxes.

Life History: 2-4 young per litter: probably more than one litter per year.

Comments: "Packrats" build a nest, or midden, 2-3 feet high at the base of a cactus, tree or among rocks. Branches, cow dung, dried bones, old cans, and cactus spines are hauled into the nest by the wood rat.

Vocabulary

browse: (brouz) A general term, commonly used in wildlife management to signify brushy plants utilized as feed by deer, elk, or cattle.

chaparral: (shap-e-ral) A word descriptive of brushy areas where plants such as manzanita, cliffrose, scrub oak, and ceanothus are the dominant plants.

community: An association of living things, plant and animal, each occupying a certain position or ecological niche, inhabiting a common environment and interacting with each other.

forbs: (fo(e)rbz) Weeds and herbs: low-growing annual or perennial plants.

ecology: The study of the relationships of living things or groups of living things to their environment.

ecological niche: (nich) The role played by an organism in a biological community; its food preferences, shelter requirements, special behaviors, and active period (e.g., nocturnal or diurnal). What it does for a living – predator, decomposer, etc. and how it performs that function.

habitat: The arrangement of food, water, shelter or cover, and space suitable to animals' needs. It is the "life range" which must include food, water, escape cover, winter shelter, and cover to rear young or to escape heat or wind.

omnivore: An animal that eats both plant and animal materials.

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