



TOTAL LENGTH: 20.5 - 34"

## American Badger

*Taxidea taxus*

These mammals are excellent diggers, using their powerful forelegs to tunnel through soil and hard ground in pursuit of gophers, ground squirrels, moles, rats, mice, and voles. Badgers will also eat Burrowing Owls, Bank Swallows, snakes, skunks, and lizards, and occasionally bees and honeycomb. Few animals are a match for the badger, which has thick fur, a tough hide and heavy neck muscles for protection, as it bites and claws during an attack. It also exudes a noxious musk as protection.

Badgers live in open grasslands, fields or pastures. They are mostly active at night. During winter months, badgers don't actually hibernate, but spend time in cycles of torpor that last about 29 hours. During these hours their temperature drops to about 48 °F, and their heartbeat slows to half its normal rate.

American Badgers lead a mostly solitary life. Males are slightly larger than females, and their lifespan is usually four to nine years. They mate during the late summer or early autumn. The female then prepares a grass-lined den in which to give birth. Babies are born blind and helpless, with only a thin coat on their bodies. They begin to open their eyes after four or five weeks. The mother continues to nurse them until they are two to three months old. Then she begins to bring them bits of solid food as they are weaned and for a few weeks afterward.

Badger tunnels are typically nine feet under ground with many chambers and one main sleeping den. In the summer, badgers may dig a new burrow each day!



## Mountain Lion

*Puma concolor*

**Common names:** Cougar, puma, panther, painter, catamount, ghost cat, screamer, devil cat, silver lion

**Average height:** Male 30" Female 24"  
**Weight range:** Male 130-180 lbs. Female 80-130 lbs.  
**Body length range:** Male 4-6 ft. Female 3-5 ft.  
**Average tail length:** Male 3 ft. Female 2 ft.

**Coat color:** Tawny brown generally, but ranges from grayish to yellowish to reddish brown; creamy white on chest, belly, throat, jaw, chin, and upper lip

**Other features:** Round, erect ears with no tufts; long, heavy tail that is dark-tipped



## Bobcat

*Lynx rufus*

**Common names:** Lynx cat, bay lynx, wildcat, red lynx, barred bobcat, palid bobcat

**Average height:** Male 18" Female 16"  
**Weight range:** Male 20-22 lbs. Female 13-13 lbs.  
**Average body length:** Male 30" Female 27"  
**Average tail length:** Male 6" Female 5"

**Coat color:** Reddish-brown, gray-brown, light gray, brown, yellowish brown; brown or black spots on legs, and sometimes visible on back; white belly with black spot; back of each ear is black with a white center spot

**Other features:** Short black ear tufts; facial ruff or collar; short tail that is white underneath with dark bands on top

# MAMMAL PREDATORS

Eat, be eaten, or starve—that is the way of life for mammals in the wild. There are many unique ways that these animals hunt, stalk, attack and kill for food. What may be surprising is how many tries it takes for young mammals to hone the skills it takes to survive and thrive. A fast learner will grow and develop, then mate and have its own young ones to train.



## Coyote

*Canis latrans*

**BODY LENGTH:** 30 - 34"  
**TAIL:** 12 - 16"

These dog-like hunters take advantage of whatever prey they can, such as insects, fruit, baby mammals, bird eggs, lizards, mice, rabbits, or fish. They are clever omnivores, and as long as they can get something, they are satisfied. Coyotes have even been seen eating dog or cat food left outside in residential areas.

Coyotes are the best runners of the Canid family, trotting along at 25-30 mph with bursts of speed up to 40 mph when pursuing prey. They run with their tails down, unlike wolves, that carry their tails up. Scientists who study coyotes note that they travel long distances, sometimes up to 400 miles.



TOTAL LENGTH: 11 - 22"

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## Long-Tailed Weasel

*Mustela frenata*

These weasels live in wooded areas and fields, usually near water sources. They have small ears, long whiskers, and short legs. Their tails are sometimes nearly 50% of their body length. They run by bounding along on short legs, chasing after prey, which they have detected by scent or by sound. Favorite foods include voles, rabbits, chipmunks, shrews, rats, and birds. They are quick, agile, and alert, and are excellent swimmers and good climbers.

Long-Tailed Weasels will nest in the abandoned burrows of ground squirrels and chipmunks, in hollow logs, and in rock piles. They make their nests using hair from their prey for lining.

Weasels mate in mid-summer, but the birth of the young is delayed until the next April or May. There are, on average, six pups that are weaned in 36 days. Then, the mother brings food to the nest and begins to teach them how to hunt. By about 56 days, the pups are independent and living on their own.

Long-tailed Weasels are non-social animals and are very aggressive toward intruders in their home range. They kill their quarry by a quick bite to the base of the skull. Sometimes they will cache part of the kill for a later meal.

The Long-tailed Weasel is valued for the part it plays in keeping populations of rats in check. These high-energy predators are, in turn, preyed upon by foxes, owls, hawks, and snakes.



## Kit Fox

*Vulpes macrotis*

TOTAL LENGTH: 15 - 20"  
(including the tail)

Kit Foxes have large ears for their size, which allow for excellent hearing, as well as for providing heat dissipation during the hot months of summer.

These small hunters are nocturnal as well as solitary. They prey on rats, cottontail rabbits, jackrabbits, field mice, insects, fish, and small birds.

Kit Foxes are monogamous and select their mates in October and November. They mate between December and February, and then move to a larger den for rearing the litter. They may take over a den that has been abandoned by an American Badger.

The size of the litter may vary between one and seven pups, depending on the health of the parents. Pups are usually born in March or April and are weaned at four weeks. These pups are usually independent and on their own by five or six months.

Kit Foxes tend to favor an environment that is somewhat dry. They take advantage of living near orchards and agricultural lands for the close proximity to food. Their life span is usually three or four years. Scientists who study these small foxes have found that 75% of their deaths are due to predation by coyotes.

One member of this fox family, the San Joaquin Kit Fox, *Vulpes macrotis macrotis*, is endangered due to loss of habitat. There are conservation groups actively involved in acquiring land to protect this fabulous fox.



## Red Fox

*Vulpes vulpes*

BODY LENGTH: 18 - 20"  
TAIL: 12 - 22"

Red Foxes are omnivores with a diet that includes rabbits, rodents, insects and fruit. They are very vocal, using many variations of yips and barks for communicating. Males are slightly larger than females. They mate in January and February, and then raise a litter of about five pups. The father brings food to the den for his mate until the pups are weaned. The mother and pups stay together as a family unit until autumn when the pups become independent. Their life span is about three years.



## Gray Fox

*Urocyon cinereoargenteus californicus*

BODY LENGTH: 20 - 24"  
TAIL: 11 - 14"

Gray Foxes live in deciduous woodlands. They are monogamous once they mate, and raise a litter of three to six pups. The pups mature in about four months, and then start to hunt for themselves.

They are solitary hunters, and their diet includes rabbits, voles, mice, shrews, birds, and berries.

Gray Foxes are unique in that their strong, hooked claws enable them to climb trees to avoid predators, and also to eat fruit. They are nocturnal, and make their dens in hollow trees, hollow stumps, and abandoned burrows.