

Alert !

Report sightings of this species:

- online: <https://irecord.org.uk/>
- by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk
- or scan QR code to report a sighting:



Raccoon

Scientific name: *Procyon lotor*

Native to: North America, Central America

Habitat: Prefers woodland near water but is adaptable and often occurs in urban areas.

A grey mammal, roughly the size of a large cat, with distinctive dark eye-patches and a long, furry tail with four to seven dark rings. Head is small with a pointed muzzle and small erect ears.

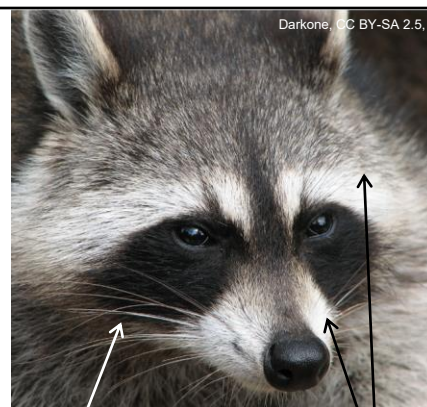
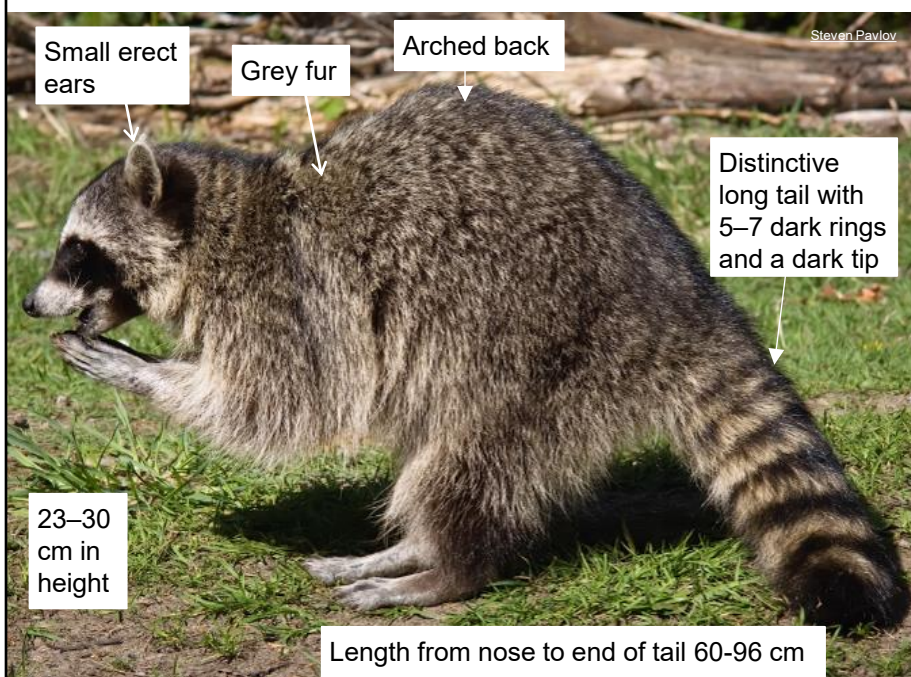
Not established in Great Britain (GB) but occasionally escapes from collections. There is a risk that this species may become established and invasive if releases continue. Raccoon is a major predator of birds and rodents and can kill domesticated animals. It can also be a vector of zoonotic disease, damages fields, gardens, and crops, and causes nuisance problems around houses.

It is illegal to buy, sell, keep, or release raccoons in GB. For details refer to: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/invasive-non-native-alien-animal-species-rules-in-england-and-wales>.



Key ID Features

Generally nocturnal, hunting and foraging at night and resting during the day



"Mask" of dark fur covering eyes, nose, and cheeks

White lines immediately above and below 'mask'



Five finger-like toes on feet - paw print includes a palm pad and five toes with sharp claws

Similar Species

There are no wild native animals in GB with which racoon is likely to be confused. It could be confused with non-native racoon dogs which are infrequently kept in captivity in GB and may escape. It could also be confused with dark furred varieties of the native red fox, which may escape captivity.

Raccoon dog

Non-native

(*Nyctereutes procyonoides*)

All white (Leucistic) raccoon dogs are sometimes kept and could be seen in the wild

Small rounded ears

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30-50 cm in height

Grey-black fur
(sometimes with
yellow and red)

Small
head with
pointed
muzzle

Body length
50–70 cm,
tail 13–25
cm

Dark
underside
and legs

Four digits on paw
(raccoon has five)

Black markings on face

Short, thick tail
with no rings

Red fox (dark furred)

Native

(*Vulpes vulpes*)

Large ears

No mask
on face

Large bushy tail

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Melanistic form of native red
fox, sometimes known as
'silver fox'

Further information:

- <https://www.nonnativespecies.org/non-native-species/information-portal/view/2839>
- <https://www.cabidigitallibrary.org/doi/full/10.1079/cabicompendum.67856>
- <https://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/NIEA-ID-Guide-Procyon-lotor-Raccoon-V3-Oct24.pdf>