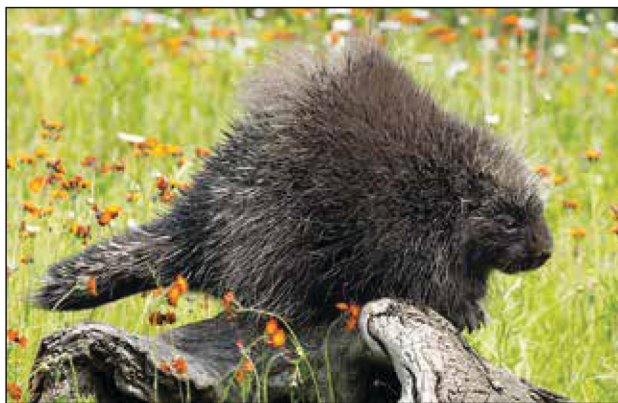


NORTH AMERICAN PORCUPINE

updated March 2017



Range	North America between Arctic Ocean and northern Mexico; found throughout most of Alaska and Canada, in the northern part of the Great Lakes region, all throughout the west and northeast regions of the United States
Habitat	Coniferous, deciduous and mixed forests. In the west, it can be found in scrubby areas
Diet (wild)	Tree cambium (inner bark), foliage, broad-leaved herbs, seeds, grains, fruit, flowers
Diet (captivity)	
Description	Length: 24–36 inches; tail: 12 inches; weight: 11–31 pounds. Distinguished by its stout, slow, lumbering form and by its spiny coat. Dark brown to black fur, with back guard hairs and spines that contain bands of yellow. Quills extend from head to tail on the back. The middle of the tail and lower back are marked by a black line. Quills on the black area are fringed with white. Each quill is 1–4 inches long and contains a fluorescent material that brightens the quills at night, when porcupines are most likely to meet predators.
Lifespan	Wild: 6–15 years
Reproduction	Gestation is 7 months, after which a female gives birth to a single offspring. Babies are born precocial and fully quilled, able to defend themselves with tail slaps. Their quills are soft at birth, but dry within several hours and are ready for action. They become independent at approximately five months of age, but are not sexually mature until two years old. Breeding occurs in October and November. A dominant male breeds with a number of different females, but only when the females are willing.
Behavior	Nocturnal and arboreal, porcupines, for the most part, have a sweet and trusting disposition that comes only to those who have little reason to be afraid. Females maintain a territory and defend it against other females; however, male territories typically overlap those of several females. An individual knows its territory quite well and usually does not venture too far from it; the main exceptions being salt or apple excursions. Porcupines have long claws that help them climb large tree trunks and surprisingly small branches. The palms and soles of porcupines have a pebbly surface and no fur. Along with their keen sense of touch, this special texture on the hands and feet improves a porcupine's grip. Because they are so good at gripping trees, porcupines can even stay in trees using only their hind feet to hold on. This frees their forelimbs for use in eating.
Our animals	1 male. Born: 2015
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North American porcupines are the largest of all porcupines and the second largest rodents in North America, outsized only by beavers. • Their Latin name means “quill pig.” A single porcupine may have 30,000 or more quills. Quills are modified hairs formed into sharp, barbed, hollow spines. • Quills are not a porcupine's first line of defense. Their first line of defense, after the bright color of their quills perhaps, is a loud tooth-chattering. They also stomp their feet and shake their bodies, which can make their quills rattle. When severely stressed, porcupines will emit a strong, repellent odor. In a confined space, the stink can make a human's eyes water and serves as an efficient deterrent against predators. • Porcupines can't shoot their quills. They have a distinctive layer of musculature just below their skin with which they can raise and lower their quills and let them go when they come in contact with a predator. The quills have barbed tips that make them difficult and painful to remove. The barbs are angled in such a way that if the quills are left unattended, they will dig deeper and deeper into an animal as it moves. If the quills avoid large bones and vital organs, with enough time the quills can work their way through an animal and come out another area. • Quills also present dangers to porcupines. Falling out of trees is quite common for porcupines and self-impalement is definitely a hazard. Antibiotics present on the quills prevent infection when a porcupine falls out of a tree and is stuck with its own quills. • Porcupines can digest wood fiber in their guts as well as or better than many ruminants. • Porcupines can locate truffles by scent and will feed heavily on them when in season. Apples are also a favorite when available. • Despite their quills, some animals, like coyotes, cougars, and fishers, are expert predators of porcupines.

Phylum
ChordataClass
MammaliaOrder
RodentiaFamily
ErethizontidaeGenus
Erethizonspecies
E. dorsatum