

### **Hooved Mammals, Family Cervidae: Deer**

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- Whitetail Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)  
Our largest surviving land mammal, the whitetail deer is often seen running with its tail raised, showing its white underside, signaling like a surrender flag. Most active during dawn and dusk, the deer is reddish in summer and grayish in winter.

### **Insect-eaters, Family Insectivora: Shrews & Moles**

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- Eastern Mole (*Scalopus aquaticus*)  
Silvery sheen in color, the mole uses powerful outward turned front legs and a broad, pointed snout to dig and burrow underground. With tiny eyes that are covered with a thin layer of skin to protect them from dirt, the mole relies more on its senses of touch and scent than its vision.

- Shorttail Shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*)  
With its short tail, lack of external ears and eyes so small that they are barely apparent, this odd-looking animal burrows underground, feeding on insects, worms, snails, other invertebrates and young mice. Although small in size (it only weighs as much as six pennies!), this shrew is not something you want to catch with your bare hands; its saliva is poisonous (similar to that of a Komodo Dragon's) and a bite could prove hazardous to your body tissues.

### **Pouched Mammals, Family Marsupialia: Marsupials**

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- Opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*)  
The only marsupial (a mammal which carries its premature young in a body pouch until further developed, like a kangaroo) in North America. Similar in appearance to a large rat, with its scraggly fur and long naked tail, the opossum is not a rodent. Known for "playing possum", this animal feigns death by lying motionless and releasing a pungent odor to convince predators it is rotten and no longer a tasty meal.

Find this information online at:  
[www.fortwayneparks.org](http://www.fortwayneparks.org)

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*Play well... Live well*

# Mammals

## A Lindenwood Nature Preserve Pocket Field Guide



### **Mammal Mania**

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Mammals are grouped together in the animal kingdom due to their presence of body hair and mammary glands which are used to nurse their young with nutrient-rich milk. All mammals possess these characteristics, even if they are not obvious (like the hair on dolphins or armadillos). Most mammals give birth to live young after a gestation period when the fetus develops inside of the female's womb (the length of which varies greatly among mammals). The duck-billed platypus (Australia) and echidna (Australia, Tasmania and New Guinea), are odd mammals and exceptions to the rule because they lay eggs.

### **Lindenwood Nature Preserve Mammal Species Descriptions**

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This list consists only of animals documented to live in and around the preserve property. Species are arranged according to taxonomic schedule.

### **Flesh-eaters with Anal Scent Glands, Family Mustelidae: Skunks**

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- Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*)  
This infamous creature of the night, the skunk, feeds widely on insects, grubs, bird eggs, small animals and fruit. If its bluff of shuffling and growling fails to ward off a perceived predator or threat, the skunk may bend its body into a U-shape, with both the head and rear-end facing the intruder, and unleash the foul, lingering spray that we all recognize. This potent spray can travel up to fifteen feet! But remember, as with most small mammals, the first defense is one of flight, only if the skunk feels trapped and that its life is in danger will it expend the energy required to create and replenish this anal secretion. (The Mustelidae family consists of Weasels, Ferrets, Skunks, Martens, Fishers, Minks, Otters, Wolverines and Badgers.)

## **Dog-like Flesh-eaters, Family Canidae: Canines**

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The Canidae Family consists of primarily flesh-eating (carnivore) mammals with dog-like appearances and body plans. This includes a scent gland at the top of the tail base (the reason dogs are always sniffing each other's, and our, butts); large ears positioned on the top of the head; large eyes optimally positioned for peripheral vision; large, dilating pupils for nocturnal vision; large, padded and clawed feet; and excellent audio, visual and olfactory senses. Most Canines are social animals, living within a hierarchal family unit.

- Coyote (*Canis latrans*)

A predominately prairie and hedge row animal, this species of Canine is making a large comeback in every part of the United States. Once hunted for bounty, this social mammal is highly adaptable to the growing urban environment. Both coyote "parents" rear the young although usually an alpha female is the one in charge of the family unit, harnessing the help of her subordinate sisters and daughters. Predators at the top of the food chain, coyotes eat small animals including rabbits, mice, birds and others. Coyotes also scavenge for food including already dead or dying animals and vegetable matter. Unlike commonly believed, coyotes would rather hunt for small, dying or already dead animals rather than expending the energy of stalking and chasing large, healthy animals.

- Red Fox (*Vulpes fulva*)

A small, reddish canid, the red fox has a white-tipped tail and relies on a diet of small animals like mice, rabbits, birds, large insects and occasionally plant material and fruit. True to its image, the fox is sly and elusive and is rarely seen although its stalking and predatory pounce is quite a sight!

## **Ringtailed Flesh-eaters, Family Procyonidae: Raccoons**

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- Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)

From the Algonquin word "arakunem" meaning "hand-scratcher", some believe raccoons wash their food before eating; others believe it is simply hunting

for crayfish and frogs in the shallow water. Either way, this opportunistic mammal will eat whatever it can get its little hands onto (even your trash). Preferring stream and pond environments raccoons feed on small water-dwelling animals, insects and fruits. The raccoon is the only species of its family in the Northeastern United States.

## **Flying Mammals, Family Chiroptera: Bats**

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- Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*)

These nocturnal animals, bats, are the only mammal capable of true flight. Although not blind, bats do rely more on their sonar sense than their vision. Known as echolocation, bats emit high-frequency vocalizations which bounce off of objects. They then use the echoes created from these vibrations to make an "image" of their surroundings, including prey. The enormous number of insects consumed by bats is directly beneficial.

## **Gnawing Mammals / Rodents, Family Cricetidae: Mice, Rats & Voles**

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Small- to medium-sized rodents, this family of prey makes nests of soft grasses and downy materials in low tree cavities, wood piles and in man-made structures (mice), underneath logs and stumps (vole) or beneath shallow water / pond banks (muskrat and nutria). Although they mainly rely on vegetable matter, these animals will also eat meat if available.

- Deer Mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*)

This small mouse (from head to tip of tail, 5" – 9") ranges in color from pale grayish buff to deep reddish brown. Very similar to the White-footed mouse (below).

- White-footed Mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*)

A slightly larger species (from head to tip of tail, 8" – 9") has white feet and belly and the upperparts of its body are rich reddish brown. This species' tail is usually shorter than its body.

- Pine Vole (*Pitymys pinetorum*)

Known for burrowing ceaselessly through your lawn, these critters like to stay in loose soil and leaf debris near the surface.

- Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*)

A water-loving animal, muskrats have webbed hind feet and are often seen swimming in ponds or scurrying up its banks. Similar in appearance to a large rat (but with a slightly flattened tail), muskrats devour aquatic vegetation, clams, frogs and occasionally fish. The ability to hunt underwater is greatly boosted by the ability to stay under water for up to fifteen minutes.

- Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*)

The exotic and invasive South American version of the native muskrat, nutrias are larger and their tails are not flattened. Strictly nocturnal, these aliens have begun to strip away native vegetation (and the food supply of muskrats) due to their all-encompassing diet and the lack of natural predators.

## **Gnawing Mammals / Rodents, Family Leporidae: Rabbits**

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- Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

Mostly nocturnal, these vegetarians eat lush green plants, the buds of woody plants and pretty much any other edible fruit or vegetable it can find. Several times a year females line bowl-shaped nests with fur and grasses for their litter of bunnies, each of about four or five young. Rabbits tend to take the "flight" rather than "fight" defense mechanism, either immediately fleeing or remaining completely motionless until the threat subsides. (Other rabbit species and hares also belong to this family.)

## **Gnawing Mammals / Rodents, Family Sciuridae: Squirrels and Marmots**

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Except for the flying squirrel, this family is diurnal (active during daylight). The chipmunk and woodchuck nest in burrows in the ground or beneath logs while all of the "tree squirrels" (all other species) listed below reside in leaf nests in trees or in high, small tree cavities. Squirrels are known for sitting up on their haunches to avoid danger by enabling them to see above low-lying vegetation.

- Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*)

A tiny, solitary ground squirrel with white "racing stripes", chipmunks are abundant and may cause

people headaches with their burrowing tunnels in the yard. Feeding on seeds, bulbs, fruits, nuts, insects, meat and eggs, chipmunks have a reputation of cramming as much food as they can into their cheek pocket cavities and then running off to their underground burrow where the food is stored. Listen for the chipmunks' high-pitched "chip" alarm sound.

- Eastern Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger*)

This larger species of squirrel is known for its reddish coloring and large bushy tail. Often seen perched on its haunches nibbling on a nut, this squirrel does not shy away from its human neighbors.

- Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

A slightly smaller squirrel that is mostly grey in color with white-tipped hairs bordering the tail. Due to a melanistic color phase, individuals among this species are black in color and this variety may dominate a local squirrel population.

- Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)

The smallest of the tree squirrels, this species' loud ratchet-like call is usually heard before the animal is seen. Uniformly reddish in color, this species has a black line along its sides in the summer.

- Southern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*)

(Named the "southern" flying squirrel because its cousin, the northern flying squirrel, lives north of our area.) Seldom seen due to their aerial, elusive lifestyle, this animal does not fly in the true sense of the word -- it glides. Using a small flap of loose skin along each side of its body, from its front to hind legs, the squirrel jumps from one tree branch and glides across the open expanse to land on another. This species is the only strictly nocturnal mammal in our area.

- Woodchuck (*Marmota monax*)

Also known as a Groundhog, this short-legged animal dens in extensive burrows with two or more openings. Woodchucks feed on succulent plants and are one of a few species who truly hibernate (its awakening from hibernation is celebrated by Groundhog Day!). The woodchuck eats almost continuously during late summer in order to gain the half inch of body fat that will sustain it through the long and cold winter.