

MAMMALS OF SWEETWATER WETLANDS



Photo : Paul Berquist

COYOTE – *Canis latrans*

Range – United States and into Canada and Mexico.

Habitat – Found in just about every habitat type, including suburban areas of cities. Prefer open desert plains, grasslands, high mesas and open forests but are known to adapt to open, natural space in urban settings.

Food – Coyotes hunt both day and night. They are important predators of rabbits and rodents but will feed on larger mammals such as young deer. They will also eat small reptiles, insects and carrion. In early summer, they feed heavily on saguaro fruit, mesquite beans, and other vegetable matter.

Other – Coyotes may live alone, in pairs, or in small, territorial packs. Their dog-like tracks can be seen along the paths at Sweetwater Wetlands.

BOBCAT – *Felis rufus*

Range – North America from mountains to deserts.

Habitat – Found in all kinds of habitats but prefer rocky hillsides with lots of vegetation.

Food – Bobcats are solitary predators. They eat small mammals including mice and other rodents, rabbits, bats, ground squirrels and even newborn deer. They also eat birds such as doves and quail. They have been known to take domestic animals such as poultry and newborn livestock.

Other – Bobcats have been seen and even photographed at Sweetwater Wetlands.



Photo : Young Cage



Photo : Paul Berquist

RACCOON – *Procyon lotor*

Range – Fairly common throughout Arizona and across North America.

Habitat – Prefers brushy areas, almost exclusively near some type of water source. Also found in urban areas.

Food – They eat just about anything including crayfish, fish, insects, frogs and the eggs of any animal they can find.

Other – Raccoons are nocturnal and usually solitary. At Sweetwater Wetlands, look for their distinct, hand-like tracks in the mud near the water's edge.

BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT – *Lepus californicus*

Range – Western United States.

Habitat – Deserts, prairies, pastures and brushy areas.

Food – Jackrabbits eat a variety of plant matter including grasses, herbs, forbs and small bushes. They will eat woody material and dried plants during droughts and in winter.

Other – They are eaten by hawks, coyotes, bobcats, and owls. Because they have so many predators they are very wary. They produce several litters each year. The black-tailed jackrabbit has distinctive long ears tipped with black and a prominent black stripe that runs from its rump to the top of its tail.



Photo : Earle Robinson



Photo : Paul Berquist

ROUND-TAILED GROUND SQUIRREL – *Spermophilus tereticaudus*

Range – Common inhabitants of the Sonoran Desert and throughout desert areas of the southwestern U.S. into Mexico.

Habitat – Found in desert flatlands where the soil is good for digging burrows.

Food – These squirrels feed on plant parts, including seeds. They are known to eat insects and even roadkill.

Other – They build underground burrows, tunneling into the desert soil. There may be several small openings to their burrows. Look for their burrows in the upland, desert areas around the wetlands at Sweetwater. They have many predators including hawks, snakes, bobcats and coyotes.

JAVELINA – *Tayassu tajacu*

Range – Desert scrub areas throughout central Arizona, east to Texas, and south to South America.

Habitat – Brushy habitat along creeks, stream beds and canyons within desert mountains.

Food – Javelina are opportunistic feeders. They feed on flowers, roots, grasses, forbs, tubers, fruits, mesquite pods, and most succulent plants. They eat a lot of cacti, especially prickly pear.

Other – Javelinas live in herds and mark their territories with their scent and droppings. Mountain lions and bobcats are the most common predators of javelina although coyotes, golden eagles and even foxes are known to prey on young javelina.



Photo : Paul Berquist



Photo : Paul Berquist

ARIZONA COTTON RAT – *Sigmodon arizonae*

Range – Central and southern Arizona.

Habitat – Desert areas primarily along canals and stream banks thick with weeds, grasses and brush. They are strongly associated with the drainages and waterways of the southwest.

Food – Cotton rats mostly eat green plants and grasses and are known to occasionally eat insects. Unlike some rodents, they do not store their food.

Other – They are active both day and night throughout the year. At Sweetwater Wetlands, they can be seen scurrying between patches of cattail and bulrushes. They can have up to twelve young in a litter with numerous litters per year. They are important prey species for many predators including coyotes, foxes, hawks and owls.

MEXICAN FREE-TAILED BAT – *Tadarida brasiliensis*

Range – Most free-tailed bats live in the western U.S. and Mexico.

Habitat – Occur in a variety of habitats from low-elevation deserts to pine-oak forests at 9,000' elevation. They live in colonies in caves, large, hollow trees, abandoned mines, tunnels, under bridges and in buildings. They will also use bat houses.

Food – They eat a variety of insects, especially moths. Free-tailed bats play an important role in reducing agricultural pests such as cotton boll moths and cut worm moths.

Other – Females give birth to one or two young per year. Their colonies can reach numbers in the millions.



Photo : AZ Game and Fish Department



Photo : Earle Robinson

DESERT COTTONTAIL RABBIT – *Sylvilagus audubonii*

Range – Deserts and plains throughout the western United States.

Habitat – Deserts, grasslands and woodlands in areas with lots of brushy vegetation and hiding holes.

Food – They primarily eat grass but will eat other vegetation.

Other – Desert cottontails are an important prey species for many predators including hawks, foxes, owls, bobcats, snakes and coyotes. They line their burrows with grasses and fur as bedding for their young. Cottontails are smaller than jackrabbits.