



CARNIVORE PROCESS GRID

COEXISTING WITH CARNIVORES
STUDENT PACKET

Read the information provided to you and fill out this process grid. Each box should have 3-5 bullet points.

Carnivore Name	Description	Life Cycle	Diet	Habitat and Range
Black bear				
Cougar / Mountain lion				

Carnivore Name	Description	Life Cycle	Diet	Habitat and Range
Bobcat				
Coyote				
Raccoon				



BLACK BEAR

CARNIVORE FACT SHEET

NORTH AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

Ursus americanus (“American bear”)

American black bears are the smallest and most common of the three bear species in North America. There are just under one million black bears in total, about 25,000 to 30,000 of which live in Washington (WWO, 2019).

DESCRIPTION

American black bears stand from 28 to 41 inches tall at the shoulder, and are about 47 to 79 inches long from nose to tail. Males are on the larger end of the size range, and females are on the smaller end. Weight varies due to age, health, season and available food. Adult males usually weigh between 125 and 550 pounds, and females 90 to 375 pounds (WWO, 2019). They are heaviest in the fall, just before denning for the winter, and lightest right after coming out of their dens in the spring (Garshelis, 2016).



Their fur is soft and thick, with longer coarse guard hairs. Though they are called black bears, they don't have to be black—in western United States and Canada, only about half are black. Other colors can range from dark brown to cinnamon tan to light blonde (Garshelis, 2016).

Black bears have slightly pointed ears and a straight face profile. When standing, their rump is higher than their shoulders, and their shoulders have no hump (a shoulder hump is a distinct feature of grizzly bears). Their claws are about 1 to 2 inches long, and not very noticeable (WWO, 2019).

LIFE CYCLE

Black bear cubs are born in their mother's den during the winter. A litter is normally two to four cubs, though there can be single cubs or litters as large as five or six (WWO, 2019). Cubs are tiny and helpless at birth—they cannot see, hear, or walk, and have almost no fur.

The cubs and their mother stay in the den until spring. By then the cubs have fur, and can see, hear, and follow their mother around while she teaches them how to be bears. (Bears live alone unless they are a mother with cubs, so father bears do not help raise cubs.) They stay with their mother for about a year and a half. She will not have any more cubs until they have left her side (WWO, 2019).

In most places, black bears spend the winter sleeping in a den and are only active in the spring, summer and fall. In places with very mild winters, only pregnant females will den (Link, 2007).

Black bears don't have cubs of their own until they are about three to five years old. They can live to be about 18 to 23 years old, with females usually living longer than males (Link, 2007).

DIET

Black bears are omnivores, which means they eat both meat and plants. They are also opportunistic, meaning they eat whatever they can find at different times of the year. Usually, about 80-85% of a black bear's diet is plants. In spring, they eat a lot of tender plant shoots, and in summer, they focus on fruit and berries. If spawning salmon are available in the fall, they eat as many as possible to gain weight for winter (WWO, 2019).

In areas where natural food is less available, bears are more likely to look for food left behind by people. They can eat anything we (or our pets or farm animals) eat. This includes leftovers from the trash or compost, dog or cat food, birdseed in feeders, and fruit or vegetables grown in gardens (WWO, 2019).

HABITAT AND RANGE

Black bears once lived across almost all of the continental United States, Canada and northern Mexico. They are no longer found in large areas of Mexico and the central and southeastern parts of the United States. Even though they have less habitat now, the total population of black bears is increasing (Garshelis, 2016). So, there are now more black bears living in a smaller area.

Forests are the best habitat for black bears, so most live there. Smaller populations can live in deserts, shrubby woodlands, and even plains and grasslands (Garshelis, 2016).

INTERESTING!

- There are more American black bears than all other bears in the world combined (Garshelis, 2016)!
- The oldest known wild black bear lived to be 31 years old (WWO, 2019)!
- Bears have a great sense of smell—about seven times better than a dog's sense of smell (WWO, 2019)!

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BOBCAT

CARNIVORE FACT SHEET

BOBCAT

Lynx rufus ("red lynx")

Bobcats are a small wild cat found all over Washington state. They are shy, secretive, and a lot more common than people think (WDFW, 2019)!

DESCRIPTION

Adult female bobcats in Washington are about the size of a large housecat, and usually weigh less than 20 pounds. Males may be much larger, and can weigh up to 30 pounds (WDFW, 2019).



Bobcat fur is light tan to medium brown, with darker brown to black spots and stripes on parts of their bodies. Their tail is only about six inches long, and is black at the end. They have small tufts of fur on the tips of their ears, and a longer ruff along the sides of their face, making them look like they have sideburns (WDFW, 2019).

LIFE CYCLE

Bobcat kittens are usually born in the early spring, though litters can be born later in spring or even in summer (DEEP, 2020). There are typically two to four kittens in a litter (WDFW, 2019).

The kittens are born in a den, which might be anything from a small cave to a hollow log or even a small clearing deep within dense brush. Male bobcats don't help raise young, so the mother bobcat leaves them hidden safely in the den while she hunts (DEEP, 2020).

When they're first born, the kittens are tiny and helpless. They begin to be able to see and hear when they are a few days to a week old. Their mother nurses them for about two months, but starts to bring food to the den for them to try eating when they are only about a month old. Once the kittens are two months old, she starts teaching them to hunt. They may stay with her throughout the fall and winter, but if they don't choose to leave before she's ready to have a new litter, she will drive them away from her den site. If her kittens were safe there, a female bobcat might use the same den for many years (DEEP, 2020).

Bobcats usually live to be 7-10 years old. The oldest known wild bobcat lived to be 16 (Feldhammer, 2004).

DIET

Bobcats are carnivorous, so they eat only meat. They are crepuscular, which means they hunt mainly around sunrise and sunset (DEEP, 2020). So, they can hunt animals that are active during either the day or the night. They are very fierce predators, and can hunt animals bigger than themselves if they

need to, such as injured or young deer. But they prefer to hunt smaller animals, like squirrels, rats, mice, rabbits, small-to-medium birds and even fish (WDFW, 2019).

Bobcats will sometimes hunt chickens or domestic cats if it's very easy for them or there is no wild prey available (DEEP, 2020). But they prefer to hunt wild prey if they can (WDFW, 2019). Making domestic animals hard for bobcats to hunt (by keeping cats indoors and having a locked coop for chickens to sleep at night) keeps them safe.

HABITAT AND RANGE

Bobcats are found in most of the continental United States, as well as parts of southern Canada and northern to central Mexico (Kelly, 2020). Nearly any type of habitat can support bobcats. They are found in forests, grasslands and deserts, but have a harder time living in areas that get deep snow every year (WDFW, 2019).

Bobcats can also live in cities and suburbs, where they hunt animals like rats and pigeons. They are very rarely seen by people who live alongside them, though, because they are quiet ambush hunters, who rely on not being seen (WDFW, 2019).

INTERESTING!

- Bobcats mark their territory by scratching trees or stumps, like a housecat might scratch furniture (DEEP, 2020)!
- Bobcats in eastern Washington are much lighter-colored than those in western Washington (WDFW, 2019)!

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COUGAR

CARNIVORE FACT SHEET

COUGAR

Puma concolor (“Solid-colored puma”)

Cougars are the largest cats in the United States. They are sometimes called mountain lions, pumas, panthers, or many other names—more than any other animal species!

DESCRIPTION

Cougars have slender bodies and very strong back legs, making them especially good at jumping. An average adult male stands about 30 inches tall at the shoulder, is 7-8 feet long from nose to tip of tail, and weighs about 140 lbs. Adult females are about 25% smaller than males (Link, 2005).



Figure 1. Cougar CC BY 2.0 Marie Hale

Adult cougars are a solid light brown, fading to a lighter shade on their chest and belly. The color is usually tawny like an African lion, but can also be reddish or grayish. The tip of their tail is black (WWO, 2019).

LIFE CYCLE

Most cougar kittens are born during the summer, but it’s possible for litters to be born at any time of year. A litter is usually two kittens, but there can be single kittens or as many as four (Smith, 2018).

Cougar kittens weigh only about a pound at birth. They cannot see or hear for the first two weeks. The kittens are covered with dark spots, which help them stay hidden in the den while their mother hunts. Their spots fade slowly as they grow up (Smith, 2018).

When the kittens are first born, their only food is their mother’s milk. When they are a few weeks old, their mother starts bringing meat back to the den for them after she hunts. As they get older, she starts bringing the kittens with her as she hunts, teaching them everything they’ll need to know when they grow up. Young cougars stay with their mother for at least a year, and sometimes as long as two years (Link, 2005).

Female cougars often find a territory near their mother’s, and can start raising their own kittens when they’re two or three years old. Male cougars sometimes need to travel a long way before they find a place with no older males already living there. So males may be much older before they become fathers (Link, 2005).

DIET

Cougars eat only meat. Whenever they can, they do their own hunting, but they will sometimes scavenge (eat animals that are already dead) if they need to. Young cougars start by hunting smaller animals, like rabbits. When cougars are completely grown up, they mostly hunt larger animals like

deer (WWO, 2019). After killing a deer and eating as much as they can, a cougar will hide the rest, so they can keep eating for several days (Smith, 2018).

HABITAT AND RANGE

Cougars are good at living in many different habitats. They can live in any type of forest, in grasslands, and even in deserts. But if they have a choice, they prefer forests with a lot of low-growing plants to hide in (Nielsen, 2015).

Cougars were once found all over North and South America, almost as far north as the Arctic circle. They are still found in most places in South America. In North America, cougars now only live from the west coast to the Rocky Mountains, plus one small part of Florida. Across their range, the number of cougars is slowly decreasing (Nielsen, 2015).

INTERESTING!

- Cougars may be called mountain lions, pumas, panthers, catamounts, screamers, painters, or nearly 40 other names in English alone (and even more names in other languages) (WWO, 2019)!
- Cougars make many different sounds, from purrs to birdlike peeps to the *caterwaul*—a loud and sometimes scary noise that sounds like a person screaming (Link, 2005)!

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COYOTE

CARNIVORE FACT SHEET

COYOTE

Canis latrans (“barking dog”)

Coyotes are part of the dog family, along with wolves. They are very clever, and appear in many Native American stories.

DESCRIPTION

Coyotes are smaller than wolves, and can look a bit like a small German shepherd dog. They stand 20 to 24 inches tall at the shoulder, and weigh 20 to 50 pounds (CDFW, 2019). Males are usually a little bigger than females (WDFW, 2019).



The fur of coyotes can be different depending on where they live. In Washington, their fur is usually thick, and light brown in color with a lighter throat and chest (WDFW, 2019). They have a light build and long legs. Their ears are pointed, and they have a long, narrow face (CDFW, 2019).

LIFE CYCLE

Young adult coyotes pair off in late winter or early spring. When a female is ready to mate, she may attract several males. Once she chooses one, the other males wander away and the new coyote pair finds a territory to raise their pups in (Gier, 1974). Coyotes can dig their own burrow to use as a den, but they often start with the old burrow of another animal (WDFW, 2019).

The pups are born in the den. There are usually about six pups in a litter, but there can be as few as one or as many as 19 (WNMF, 2020). When the pups are first born, they are helpless. They stay in the den with their mother, who nurses them, while their father hunts and brings back food. The pups start eating solid food when they are a little over a month old (WDFW, 2019).

When the pups are about three months old, the family leaves the den area. The pups travel around the territory with their parents, learning how to hunt. They grow fast, and leave their parents by the time they are six to eight months old. A pair of coyotes usually has pups every year. If a pair keeps having pups successfully, they may stay together their whole lives (Gier, 1974).

Coyotes can live to be eight to ten years old (WDFW, 2019).

DIET

Coyotes are mostly carnivorous, which means they eat mainly meat, and some plants. Only about 10% of a coyote’s diet is plants, mostly fallen fruit. Coyotes can hunt alone, or in pairs or family groups. When they hunt alone, they catch smaller animals, but a group of coyotes can hunt animals as large as deer (WDFW, 2019).

In areas where people live, coyotes will also eat food left by humans. This might be dog or cat food, food scraps in the garbage or compost, or fallen fruit or berries. It's possible for coyotes to hunt small domestic animals, like cats, chickens or rabbits. These animals can be kept safe by keeping cats indoors, giving chickens a secure coop and pen, and keeping rabbits either indoors or in a strong, dog-proof hutch (WDFW, 2019).

HABITAT AND RANGE

Coyotes once lived only in deserts and grasslands in central North America. But human over-hunting of animals like wolves and bears changed that. Without those larger animals to fear, coyotes moved into many areas they had not lived before, including western Washington. Coyotes are now found everywhere in North America except a few islands and parts of far northeastern Canada (Kays, 2018).

Coyotes can live in almost any landscape, from grasslands to forests to the middle of cities (Kays, 2018).

INTERESTING!

- Coyotes are so smart and good at surviving any way they can, they are often included in Native American stories as happy tricksters (Weir, 1974)!
- Coyotes aren't dangerous to people unless they're being fed. In Washington, there were no known coyote attacks on people until 2006—when people who were feeding coyotes were lightly bitten and scratched by one (WDFW, 2019)!

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RACCOON

CARNIVORE FACT SHEET

RACCOON

Procyon lotor (“doglike washer”)

Raccoons are one of the most familiar North American animals. They are clever, adaptable, and able to thrive alongside us!

DESCRIPTION

Raccoons are about three feet long, including their foot-long tail, and usually weigh between 15 and 40 pounds. Their thick, warm fur is grayish-brown over most of their body, with black rings on their tail and a black mask around their eyes (WDFW, 2020).



Because their back legs are much longer than their front legs, raccoons look hunched over when they're walking or running (WDFW, 2020). They are good climbers, and often stand on their back legs to look around. Their front feet are very much like hands. They have five long toes on each front foot, which they use like we use our fingers. They have an excellent sense of touch, which is even better under water (PBS Nature, 2012).

LIFE CYCLE

Adult raccoons mostly live alone, and only look for one another when it's time to mate. In Washington, this happens anytime between January and June, but is most likely in March and April (WDFW, 2020). A pregnant female raccoon finds a hidden spot to use as a den. There, she gives birth to two or three babies, called kits, after a two-month pregnancy.

The kits stay hidden in the den until they are about seven weeks old. Then, they begin to follow their mother out at night to look for food. She teaches them everything they need to know quickly. By the time they are about twelve weeks old, the growing kits often spend several nights at a time on their own before coming back to their mother's den. As they get older and wiser, they need their mother less, but usually stay near her through the winter. When spring comes, the young adult kits wander off to find their own areas to live in (WDFW, 2020).

In the wild, raccoons rarely live longer than three years. Many predators hunt raccoons, including cougars, coyotes, bobcats, and great horned owls. In areas where raccoons share their habitat with people there are even more dangers, like getting hit by cars, eating rat poison, or being killed by people's pet dogs (WDFW, 2020). Raccoons cared for by keepers in zoos can live 18-20 years (PBS Nature 2012).

DIET

Raccoons are omnivores, which means they eat both plants and meat. They are also opportunistic, meaning they eat whatever is available depending on where they live and what time of year it is.

Since raccoons prefer to live near water, animals they eat often include crayfish, mussels and clams, and small fish. They will also eat carrion (animals that are already dead), insects, or slugs and snails (WDFW, 2020). Some will hunt small birds and small mammals, but most raccoons are not very good at that (PBS Nature, 2012). They also eat nearly any plants, from roots to fruit to leaves to seeds (WDFW, 2020).

When raccoons live near people, the easiest food for them to get is often food people have thrown away or left out, including birdseed and pet food. They are very smart, and able to open many different types of containers (WDFW, 2020). People need to think carefully about how to keep raccoons out of trash and compost.

HABITAT AND RANGE

Raccoons can live in many different habitats, as long as there is enough water. The best habitats for them are forests with streams, ponds, or wetlands, but with a source of water, they can live anywhere from grasslands to cities (Timm, 2016).

The natural range of raccoons is in non-desert areas from central Canada all the way south to Panama (Timm, 2016). But people have introduced them to many parts of the world, mostly to be raised or hunted for their fur. So they are now also found in places like Japan and central Europe, where they are considered pests (PBS Nature, 2012).

INTERESTING!

- Raccoons often hold an object under water to help them figure out if they can eat it, leading to the common belief that they wash their food (PBS Nature, 2012)!
- Raccoons are usually quiet, but can make several different sounds, including growling, chittering, and purring (WDFW, 2020)!
- Though they are not closely related to pigs, a female raccoon is called a sow, and a male is called a boar (PBS Nature, 2012)!

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