

Fur Hooves Paws and Claws

The Mammals of
British Columbia



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What Makes a Mammal? Watts

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What Makes a Mammal?

BC's mammals come in many shapes and sizes; from mouse to moose, and bat to bear. They all have certain characteristics that define them as mammals.

- **Milk.** Female mammals feed their young milk that is produced by mammary glands.
- **Live birth.** With the exception Australia's platypus and echidna, all mammals in the world give birth to live young.
- **Warm-blooded (Endotherms).** Mammals regulate their temperature internally through their metabolism, in contrast to cold-blooded animals (ectotherms), such as reptiles, amphibians, and most fish, whose internal temperature fluctuates with their environment.
- **Fur.** Mammals have fur which helps them to regulate their body temperature. Fur helps to retain heat in cold weather as well as protect from heat in hot weather. Fur is also used for camouflage, attracting a mate, and warning colouration. Whiskers and hair are used for sensory perception.



Many More Mammals!

BC is home to 137 native species of mammals including 30 marine species (such as seals and whales). There are also 13 introduced species. Because of this fantastic diversity – more species than any other part of Canada– we can't possibly cover them all! In this card set, we do our best to cover a wide range of the most common terrestrial mammals in our province, but know that there are many more to discover!





North American Badger

Taxidea taxus jeffersonii

Where found: Southern Interior of BC.

Description: One of the largest members of the weasel family, they are adapted for digging. The limbs and chest are broad and muscled for this purpose, giving the badger a flattened appearance. Characteristic white and black facial markings include black cheek patches.

Facts:

- In BC, a badger's diet consists primarily of ground squirrels, marmots, and pocket gophers. Other prey include insects and the eggs of ground-nesting birds.
- Badgers have webbed feet that make them powerful diggers and swimmers.
- Short rounded ears on the side of the badger's head have stiff hair bristles to deflect dirt from entering the ears while digging.
- In BC, humans are an adult badger's main threat. Badgers are hunted, trapped, and killed in road fatalities, and are also harmed by the loss of their grassland habitat.
- Badger burrows provide shelter for other species, including rare ones in BC such as the burrowing owl.



Townsend's Big-eared Bat



Big Brown Bat



Little Brown Myotis



Hoary Bat

Bats

Where found: Throughout BC, with the greatest diversity found in the Southern Interior. Some migrate south in the winter while others remain in BC and hibernate.

Description: There are 15 species of bats in BC. Each species has different characteristics, but they all have furry bodies and a membrane of skin over the arm and elongated finger bones. They tend to have large ears.

Facts:

- All bats in BC are able to navigate in complete darkness, using sound to “see.” This orientation system is called echolocation. The bat makes high pitched sounds above the range we can hear. The sound waves bounce off objects (including prey) as echoes. These echoes provide the bat with an object’s size, shape and distance.
- Bats are the only mammal with true flight.
- All bats in BC eat large amounts of flying insects, sometimes more than their own weight in insects per night.
- Half the bat species in BC are considered vulnerable or threatened. Habitat loss is one of the major reasons for this. White-nose syndrome is also a major threat. This fungal disease has devastated bat populations in North America. It causes infected bats to wake up more frequently during hibernation, leading them to burn through their stored fat reserves and starve before spring.



Black Bear

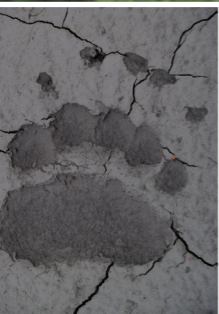
Ursus americanus

Where found: Throughout BC in a variety of forested and shrubby areas, as well as shorelines and wetlands.

Description: Black bears have rounded ears, small eyes, a large snout, thick legs, large flat-soled feet. Black bears are not always black. They may be blonde or brown. The white variety found on the Central Coast is known as the Spirit bear.

Facts:

- A bear's diet changes with the seasons. Consuming a variety of roots, grasses, buds, berries, and nuts, their diet can be up to 85% vegetation. However, they will also feed on carrion and prey such as young deer, salmon and other fish, clams, and insects.
- White-furred Spirit bears have a 30% greater success rate in catching salmon than their black-furred counterparts. The white fur provides better camouflage against the bright sky, making the bears less visible to salmon.
- The oldest known wild Black bear was 39, while the oldest in captivity was 44 years old.
- Black bears hibernate over the winter. They hibernate for a shorter period on the coast. Cubs are born during hibernation— tiny, furless, blind.



Grizzly Bear

Ursus arctos

Where found: Throughout BC, they are primarily found in mountainous terrain, in forested areas, and open slopes. They are rare on coastal islands.

Description: Grizzly bears have a noticeable hump over the shoulders due to their strong shoulder muscles used for digging. They are generally brown in colour but can also be black or blond. Grizzly bears are the largest predator in BC.

Facts:

- Grizzly bears are omnivores (they eat both plants and animals). Their diet includes salmon and other fish, insects, birds, eggs, moose, elk, and deer. They will also eat grasses, roots, nuts, and berries.
- Coastal Grizzly bears are larger than those that live in the Rocky Mountains. This is mainly due to their rich diet of salmon, clams, berries, and sedge grasses. They will also scavenge on dead whales that wash up .
- Mating between Grizzlies and Polar bears is known to take place where their ranges overlap. The offspring are known as Pizzlies or Grolar bears.
- Despite their size, Grizzly bears are capable of surprising bursts of speed. They can reach up to 48 kilometres per hour in short sprints.



Canadian Beaver

Castor canadensis

Where found: Throughout BC, in rivers, lakes, and brackish waters along the coast.

Description: Beavers are the largest rodents in North America. Their bodies are covered in thick brown fur. Their front feet are clawed while their rear feet are webbed for swimming. They are easily identified by their large, orange front teeth and their broad, flat, scaly tails.

Facts:

- Beavers feed on a wide variety of plants. They are active in winter, even under frozen waters, consuming the branches and twigs that they have cached underwater at their lodges.
- Beavers are known for their engineering abilities and builds dams, canals and dome-shaped lodges. This can change the entire ecosystem by slowing fast moving streams into meandering wetlands, which in turn becomes home to a wide variety of plants and animals.
- The beaver is the national symbol of Canada.
- Beaver pelts were used from the 16th century onwards to make hats. The hunting and trading of these furs drove Europeans west across what is now Canada, fueling exploration and contact with Indigenous peoples.



Wood Bison



Plains Bison

Bison

Where found:

Wood Bison (*Bison bison athabasca*): inhabit the northeastern region of BC where vegetation includes open aspen or conifer forests, and shrublands with extensive meadows.

Plains Bison (*Bison bison bison*): Plains Bison inhabit the Halfway-Sikanni drainages near Pink Mountain in northeast BC.

Description: Bison are bulky animals, the heaviest mammal in North America. Their shoulder humps and smaller rear end are characteristic. Bison can also be identified by their dark brown shaggy coat in winter, and distinct cape of long hairs over the front end in summer.

Facts:

- Bison and buffalo are different animals, although the terms are often used interchangeably. Bison are native to North America and Europe, while buffalo are native to Africa and Asia.
- Bison's closest relatives are yaks, which are native to the Himalayas.
- Once roaming in vast herds, the species nearly became extinct by a combination of commercial hunting and government-sponsored slaughter in the 19th century and introduction of bovine diseases from domestic cattle.



Bobcat



Canada Lynx

Bobcat *Lynx rufus*

Where found: Bobcats are limited to southern BC where winter is milder. Absent from coastal islands.

Description: Bobcats are slightly larger than a house cat and weigh between 5.4-15 kgs (12-33 lbs). They have short tufts on their ears and black streaks on the body. They have a short tail tipped with black on top and white underneath.

Facts:

- Bobcats are able to survive in a variety of habitats, from deserts, to swamps, to forests, as long as there are places to shelter. They often live in rocky areas that protect them from extreme cold or heat.

Canada Lynx *Lynx canadensis*

Where found: In dense forests throughout the northern two-thirds of the province but not the coastal islands.

Description: Canada lynx are larger than bobcats and weigh 8-17 kgs (18-38 lbs). They have long, black tufts on their ears, and their short tail has a black tip.

Facts:

- Canada lynx have hair on the underside of their broad paws, which provides traction on snowy surfaces. In contrast, bobcats, which don't have furry soles and generally don't live in areas of heavy snow.



Woodland Caribou

Rangifer tarandus caribou

Where found: Woodland caribou are found in boreal forests and mountainous regions from northern BC to southeastern BC. Three populations are recognized: northern mountain, boreal, and southern mountain.

Description: Unlike other deer species, both male and female caribou have antlers. Caribou have a barrel-shaped body covered in dense, light brown hair. Their ears and tail are short and blunt, while their legs are long and slender. Their hooves are large and semicircular.

Facts:

- Male caribou drop their antlers in the fall, while females keep theirs through the winter.
- The caribou is featured on the Canadian quarter.
- All caribou populations in BC are of conservation concern due to habitat loss and fragmentation caused by logging, mining, and oil and gas. They are also threatened by wolves and other predators.
- Across their range, caribou are an important part of the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Traditional uses of caribou include warm winter clothing, shelters, food, tools, antler carvings, rawhide for drums, boats, and more. As caribou numbers in BC have decreased, these traditions have been deeply affected.



Red Squirrel



Douglas Squirrel



Northern Flying Squirrel

Tree Squirrels

Where found:

Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*): Found throughout the province wherever conifers are common, including Vancouver Island, but absent from other parts of the southwest coast.

Douglas Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus douglasii*): Primarily found in southwestern coastal areas. Relies on old growth and mature conifer forest habitat.

Northern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*): Found throughout the province in the trees of coniferous forests. While they can't actually fly, they can glide long distances using the flaps of skin between their front and back legs.

Description: Colours from red to brown to grey, bushy tails, strong hind legs for jumping. Long upper and lower front teeth typical of rodents.

Facts:

- Tree squirrels belong to a larger squirrel family, *Sciuridae*, which also includes marmots and chipmunks.
- Nuts and tree seeds are their main food sources. A tree squirrel's diet may also include fruits, plants, sap, fungi, insects, birds' eggs, and amphibians.
- Squirrels bury nuts and seeds over a wide area to recover over the winter and often forget some, resulting in the planting of new trees.





Marmots

Where found:

Yellow-Bellied Marmot (*Marmota flaviventris*): Found in the mountainous areas of the south-central part of the province.

Hoary Marmot (*Marmota caligata*): Found in mountainous areas all across BC.

Vancouver Island Marmot (*Marmota vancouverensis*): Found only in mountainous areas of Vancouver Island.

Woodchuck (*Marmota monax*): Found in mountainous areas all across BC. Also known as a groundhog.

Description: Marmots are in the squirrel family, *Sciuridae*, which also includes tree squirrels, chipmunks, and ground squirrels. They are stocky and have long, continuously growing front teeth (incisors) typical of all rodents. They spend a lot of time in and around their burrows, where they hibernate for the winter.

Facts:

- The Hoary marmot is BC's largest species of marmot. It is about the size of a beaver, with an average weight of around 4.6 kg, and an average length of 61cm.
- The Vancouver Island marmot is endemic to Vancouver Island, meaning it is not found wild anywhere else in the world. It is critically endangered, with a captive breeding program underway.



Yellow Pine Chipmunk



Least Chipmunk

Chipmunks

Where found:

Yellow-Pine Chipmunk (*Neotamias amoenus*): Found across central to southern BC (excluding Vancouver Island) in brushy, coniferous forests.

Least Chipmunk (*Neotamias minimus*): Found in central to northern BC in habitats ranging from sagebrush to alpine.

Red-Tailed Chipmunk (*Neotamias ruficaudus*): Found in southeastern BC in coniferous forests and meadows.

Townsend's Chipmunk (*Neotamias townsendii*): Found in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley in areas with dense shrubbery, especially salal.

Description: Chipmunks are in the larger squirrel family *Sciuridae*, which includes tree squirrels and marmots.

Chipmunks in BC are similar in appearance, having a long tail and black and white stripes down their backs.

Facts:

- Chipmunks hibernate in regions where winter is harsh, but in milder parts of their range they remain active year-round.
- Their diet consists of acorns, berries, maple seeds, thistle seeds, grain seeds, grass, roots, birds' eggs, insects, and conifer seeds.
- Babies are born and spend their first days in nests made in underground burrows.



Columbian Ground Squirrel



Arctic Ground Squirrel

Ground Squirrels

Where found:

Columbian Ground Squirrel (*Uroditellus columbianus*): Found through southeastern BC, in mountainous terrain and high plains.

Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel (*Callospermophilus lateralis*): Found southeastern BC, in rocky forest and sagebrush.

Arctic Ground Squirrel (*Uroditellus parryii*): Found in northern BC, in tundra ridges.

Cascade Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel (*Callospermophilus saturatus*): Found in the mountains of south-central BC.

Description: Ground squirrels are rodents belonging to the squirrel family, *Sciuridae*, which includes tree squirrels, chipmunks, and marmots.

Facts:

- Arctic ground squirrels have a reddish-yellow summer coat which they replace in fall with a silvery coat. This coat is less visible against the snow and helps them evade predators such as foxes and snowy owls.
- Ground squirrels reside in burrows, creating nests for hibernation or rearing of young. These burrow have a main entrance and multiple alternate entrances in case of danger. They have a separate “toilet” area to keep the burrow clean.



Meadow Vole



Townsend's Vole

Voles *Genus Microtus*

Where found:

Found throughout BC in a wide variety of habitats, including alpine meadows, in dense forests of conifers, and in more arid, sagebrush habitats. There are 10 species of vole found in BC.

Description: Voles are small rodents that are relatives of mice. However, they have a stouter body, a longer, hairy tail, and smaller eyes and ears.

Facts:

- Female voles can have up five to ten litters of babies per year. As a result, vole populations can grow very large within a short time. One mating pair can produce 100 offspring every year.
- Voles thrive on small plants; however, they will also eat carrion, nuts, and fruits.
- Many predators eat voles, including martens, owls, hawks, falcons, coyotes, bobcats, foxes, raccoons, squirrels, snakes, weasels, and lynx.
- Voles spend much of their time underground in complex burrow systems as part of a colony. This defines them as “semifossorial”. Here they nest, seek protection, and feed on vegetation from under the earth’s surface.



Cougar

Puma concolor

Where found:

Throughout southern BC and Vancouver Island in forests and semi-wooded areas from sea level to the subalpine. Not found on Haida Gwaii and rare in northern BC.

Description: Cougars are the largest members of the cat family in BC. Adults can measure almost 2.5 m (8 feet) long from nose to the tip of their long tail. Cougars vary in colour from reddish-brown to tawny. Cougar kittens are spotted until they are 4-5 months old.

Facts:

- Cougars are also known as Puma, Mountain Lion, Catamount and Panther.
- The average adult cougar track is around 9 cm high by 10 cm wide. Like other cats' tracks, they're rounded with four toes and don't show claws.
- The cougar is an ambush predator. Deer are its primary prey but it also hunts a variety of rodents.
- The cougar has the most extensive range of any wild land mammal in the Americas, spanning from the Yukon in Canada to the southern Andes in Chile.
- Vancouver Island has the highest density of cougars in BC.



Coyote

Canis latrans

Where found:

Coyotes are found in grasslands, deserts, forested hills, and mountains throughout BC, as well as near human populated areas. Absent from coastal islands.

Description: The average coyote weighs 7 to 20 kg (15 to 44 lb). Their fur colour is predominantly light gray and red or tawny interspersed with black and white. Coyotes are in the dog family (*Canidae*) and are smaller than wolves.

Facts:

- Coyotes are very vocal and will bark, yip, and howl together to promote bonding within the family group.
- Coyotes are primarily carnivorous. Their diet consists of deer, rodents, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates. They may also eat fruits and vegetables on occasion.
- The coyote is a prominent character in Indigenous traditions, usually depicted as a trickster.
- Coyotes are versatile, able to adapt to and expand into environments modified by humans. Urban coyotes are common in many cities, including Vancouver.



Mule Deer



White-tailed Deer

Deer

Where found:

Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*): Widespread throughout BC, they migrate from higher elevation forests in summer to lower hillsides in the winter.

White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*): Found in the eastern half of BC in montane forests and brushlands in summer, and valley bottoms in winter.

Description: The most noticeable differences between white-tailed and mule deer are ear size, tail colour (the mule deer's ears are larger and the tail is black-tipped), and antler configuration. Mule deer antlers fork as they grow, rather than branching from a single main beam, as is the case with white-tails.



White-tailed deer

Facts:

- There are 3 subspecies of mule deer found in BC: Sitka black-tailed deer, Columbian black-tailed deer, and Rocky Mountain mule deer.
- Deer are “crepuscular”, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk, and rest sporadically throughout the day and night.
- Mule deer are named for their large ears, which are similar to that of a mule's.



Roosevelt Elk



Rocky Mountain Elk

Elk

Where found:

Roosevelt Elk (*Cervus canadensis roosevelti*): Range includes temperate rainforests and forest-edge habitat on Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

Rocky Mountain Elk (*Cervus canadensis nelsoni*): Found in southeastern BC in montane forests of the Rocky Mountains.

Description: Roosevelt elk are larger than Rocky Mountain elk. They have a dark brown head and neck, a reddish body, and a light coloured rump.

Facts:

- Elk can weigh up to 540 kg (1,200 lbs).
- Elk are also known as “wapiti”, a word derived from a Shawnee and Cree word meaning “white rump”.
- Elk are primarily herbivores, with their diet changing seasonally. They eat grasses and low-growing plants in the spring and summer, and woody plants like bark and twigs in the fall and winter. They occasionally consume bones, antlers, or even bird eggs for supplemental minerals and nutrients.
- Four of the six subspecies of elk known to have inhabited North America since historical times remain. The other two subspecies have been extinct for at least a century.



Fisher

Pekania pennanti

Where found:

Found primarily in older coniferous forests. They are found throughout much of BC, but not on the coastal islands.

Description: Fishers are medium-sized members of the weasel family with a long body, short legs, and rounded ears. They are dark brown and can appear almost black. They have a long tail and are sometimes referred to as “fisher cats”; however, they are not related to cats (felines).

Facts:

- Despite the name “fisher”, they are not known to eat fish. Their primary prey is snowshoe hares and porcupines. They are also known to supplement their diet with insects, nuts, berries, and mushrooms.
- Fishers have few predators besides humans, who trap them for their fur.
- Their feet are large, with retractable claws, making it easier for them to move on top of snow.
- Fishers have highly mobile ankle joints allowing them to descend trees head-first. This is an unusual ability for mammals.



American Mink

Neogale vison

Where found:

Found throughout BC, typically near water. Three subspecies found in the province include the Western mink, the Vancouver Island mink, and the Alaskan mink.

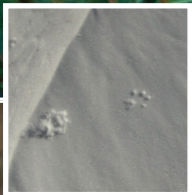
Description: A semi-aquatic member of the weasel family with a long body, webbed feet and a long, cylindrical tail. Their fur is dense and can vary from dark-blackish to light tawny.

Facts:

- Mink dens typically consist of long burrows in river banks, holes under logs, tree stumps, or roots and hollow trees.
- The American mink is a carnivorous animal that feeds on rodents, fish, crustaceans, amphibians, and birds.
- Large birds of prey, such as bald eagles and great horned owls, occasionally hunt American minks.
- Minks are trapped or farmed for their fur, which is primarily used in fur coats, jackets, capes, and accessories.
- While native to North America, American minks have established populations in Europe, Asia, and South America, where they have escaped or been released from fur farms. They are considered invasive and harm native wildlife and habitats.



Pacific Marten



American Marten

Martens

Where found:

Pacific Marten (*Martes caurina*): Found along the west coast of BC in deciduous and coniferous forests.

American Marten (*Martes americana*): Found in old conifer and mixed forests throughout BC.

Description: Martens are long and slender with fur ranging from yellowish, to brown and near black. The Pacific marten has slightly different colouration, a larger snout, and broader skull than the American marten.

Facts:

- The marten diet is omnivorous and changes with the seasons, but relies heavily on small mammals like voles. In winter, they eat snowshoe hares and squirrels.
- Martens are important seed dispersers; seeds generally pass through the animal intact, and are able to sprout.
- In the 1800s-1900s, martens were overhunted for their pelts, which were used to make luxury garments. Since then, protection measures and reintroduction efforts have allowed populations to increase, but deforestation is still a problem for the marten throughout much of its range.



Long-tailed Weasel



Ermine in summer



Ermine in winter



Weasels

Where found:

Ermine (*Mustela richardsonii*): Found in forests throughout BC.

Long-Tailed Weasel (*Neogale frenata*): Found in the forests of south to central BC.

Least Weasel (*Mustela nivalis*): Found in forests of eastern BC.

Description: Weasels have slender bodies and elongated necks. Their legs are short and their tail length differs between species. They have reddish-brown fur on their backs and a cream belly. In winter their coat is completely white.

Facts:

- Ermines are also referred to as “stoats” when in their summer coats. In winter, when they are pure white, ermines are prized as a luxury item used to trim coats and other items. They were also used by Indigenous peoples as trim on regalia.
- Weasels prey primarily on small rodents, but will also eat rabbits, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and insects.
- The collective noun for weasels is either a “gang” or a “pack”.
- Weasels do not dig their own burrows; instead, they use the burrows of the rodents they kill. They will also use log piles, stumps, or rock piles.



Northwestern Deer Mouse

Peromyscus keeni

Where found:

Found in forests along the west coast of BC, including on the islands.

Description: This species has large eyes, a dark brown-grey back and a white belly. They are noted to be better runners and jumpers than the common house mouse (an introduced species more likely found in homes).

Facts:

- The common name of “deer mouse” is in reference to both their agility, as well as their two-toned colouring, similar to that of a deer.
- Deer mice are known to be carriers of hantaviruses. This disease doesn’t affect the mice, but can be fatal to humans.
- Deer mice sometimes consume seeds found in black bear scats. They also hoard seeds to store for winter survival.
- There are 80 species of deer mice in North America. However, 10 species are thought to be extinct due to limited habitat and predation by feral cats and other predators.



Red Fox

Vulpes vulpes



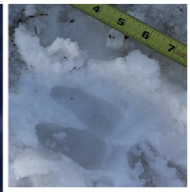
Where found:

Found throughout BC, excluding Haida Gwaii, Vancouver Island, and the Gulf Islands. The Red fox is found in a variety of habitats throughout its range, from prairies and scrubland to forest settings, as well as urban areas.

Description: The red fox has reddish-brown fur, long legs, black “stockings”, pointed black-tipped ears, and a large white-tipped bushy tail. Their muzzle may be black or reddish-brown.

Facts:

- Foxes are opportunistic feeders, eating a variety of plants and animals. Small rodents are an important part of their diet, but they will also eat snowshoe hares, marmots, ground squirrels, birds, and birds eggs, as well as invertebrates. Plant material in their diet includes berries, apples, acorns, and corn.
- Ten subspecies of red fox are recognized in North America. Two are found in BC: British Columbia Red fox, *V. v. abietorum*, and Cascade Red fox, *V. v. cascadensis*.
- Wolves are known to kill and eat red foxes in disputes over carcasses.



Mountain Goat

Oreamnos americanus

Where found:

In BC, found throughout the Coast and Rocky Mountains, usually above the tree line.

Description: Mountain goats have a stocky body, a hump above the shoulder, sharply pointed short black horns, and long, narrow, pointed ears. The coat is shaggy and white and the hoofs have two toes.

Facts:

- Mountain goats are herbivores and spend most of their time grazing. Their diets include grasses, herbs, sedges, ferns, mosses, lichens, and twigs and leaves from the shrubs and conifers growing in their high-altitude habitat.
- In the wild, mountain goats usually live 12 to 15 years, with their lifespans limited by the wearing down of their teeth. In zoos, however, they can live for 16-20 years.
- The cougar is the primary predator of the mountain goat, being powerful enough to overwhelm an adult and uniquely nimble enough to navigate the rocky habitat. Other predators include wolves, wolverines, lynx, and bears.



Snowshoe Hare

Lepus americanus

Where found:

Found year-round in thickets, woodlands, and mixed forests up to subalpine elevations throughout BC.

Description: Sometimes called a “varying hare” because their coat changes with the seasons, from brown in summer to white in winter. Their back feet are large and furry, keeping the hare insulated and, like snowshoes, help the hare to stay atop deep snow.

Facts:

- In winter, snowshoe hares eat branches, twigs, and small stems of birches, alders, and willows. In summer, they consume leaves of blueberries, willow, birch, salal, and labrador tea.
- Snowshoe hares are important prey for many predators. The primary predator is the Canada lynx, but others include: bobcats, fishers, martens, long-tailed weasels, minks, foxes, coyote, wolves, cougars, great horned owls, barred owls, spotted owls, red-tailed hawks, northern goshawks, and golden eagles.
- The snowshoe hare may have up to four litters per year, each of which average three to eight young.



Moose

Alces alces

Where found:

Found throughout most of BC, except the extreme northwest and southeast corners, and the coastal islands.

Description: On average, an adult moose stands 1.4–2.1 m (4 ft 7 in–6 ft 11 in) high at the shoulder, which is more than 30 cms (1 ft) taller than the next-largest member of the deer family, the elk. Their legs are long and narrow, below a stocky body and head. Male moose have antlers that are broad and flat with points along the outer edge.

Facts:

- Moose have the largest antlers of any living deer.
- Moose with antlers have more acute hearing than those without antlers. A study of antlers with a microphone found that the flat antler acts to amplify sound at the moose's ear.
- After the mating season, males drop their heavy antlers to conserve energy for the winter. A new set of antlers will then regrow in the spring.
- Moose are herbivores with a seasonal diet. In winter, their diet consists mainly of woody browse, such as willow, balsam fir, and birch, while summer diets include a greater quantity of leaves and aquatic plants, which are rich in essential sodium.



North American River Otter

Lontra canadensis

Where found:

Found throughout the province in lakes, wetlands, waterways, and in sheltered coastal bays and estuaries.

Description: River otters are members of the weasel family and have the long, flexible body shape that is typical of the family. The otter is protected and insulated by a thick, water-repellent coat of fur. Their feet are webbed.

Facts:

- River otters establish burrows close to the water's edge. The den typically has many tunnel openings. Unlike sea otters, river otters spend time on land, sleeping, travelling, and eating.
- River otters will eat what is available in and around the water body that they are close to. Fish are a primary part of their diet, along with clams, mussels, snails, crayfish, crabs, and amphibians.
- River otters may approach within a few feet of a boat or a person on shore due to their near-sightedness, a consequence of vision adapted for underwater sight.
- Otter scats are known as "spraints" and often contain crustacean shells and fish scales. The scat is often deposited on top of logs, rocks, or other landmarks.



Sea Otter

Enhydra lutris

Where found:

The sea otter inhabits nearshore environments along the BC coast.

Description: Adult sea otters typically weigh between 14 and 45 kg (30 and 100 lb), making them the heaviest members of the weasel family. While they can walk on land, they are considered a marine mammal because they spend nearly all their life at sea. They are insulated in the water by an exceptionally thick coat of fur, thickest of all mammals.

Facts:

- Sea otters dive to the sea floor to forage, preying mostly upon marine invertebrates such as sea urchins, various mollusks and crustaceans, and some species of fish.
- The sea otter is a keystone species, having a particularly large impact on its habitat. Sea otters control sea urchin populations which would otherwise inflict extensive damage to kelp forest ecosystems.
- Sea otters were hunted extensively for their fur between 1741 and 1911, causing their population to dwindle to 1,000-2,000 individuals. Since the application of an international ban on hunting, and conservation efforts, their numbers are slowly increasing. They were completely extirpated from the BC coast and have only returned due to reintroduction.



North American Porcupine

Erethizon dorsatum

Where found:

Found in coniferous woods throughout BC. They do not occur on coastal islands.

Description: Porcupines are large, quill-covered rodents. They are usually dark brown or black in color, with white highlights. Their body is stocky, with a small face, short legs, and a short, thick tail.

Facts:

- The porcupine's scientific name, *Erethizon dorsatum*, can be loosely translated from latin as "animal with the irritating back".
- A porcupine's quills are made of keratin, the same protein that makes up hair and fingernails.
- During the summer, porcupines eat twigs, roots, stems, berries, leaves, and other vegetation. Porcupines also eat certain insects and nuts. In the winter, they eat mainly conifer needles and tree bark.
- When threatened, an adult porcupine can bristle its quills, displaying a white stripe down its back, and use its teeth to make a warning, clacking sound. However, it is a myth that they shoot their quills.
- Porcupines have a relatively long life expectancy, with some individuals reaching 30 years of age.



Raccoon

Procyon lotor

Where found:

Common through southern BC, Vancouver Island, and the Gulf Islands in a variety of coastal and forested habitats and in urban areas.

Description: Raccoons are 40 to 70 cm in length with a distinctive black mask around the eyes, a greyish-brown body, and four to seven dark rings around their tail. The forepaws are hand-like and very dexterous.

Facts:

- The raccoon is an omnivorous opportunist and a scavenger. Food can include crabs, crayfish, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates. Raccoons also forage in human garbage and eat pet food.
- As a result of escapes and deliberate introductions in the mid-20th century, raccoons are now found across central Europe, the Caucasus, and Japan.
- Many names for raccoon relate to its habit of washing its food. For example the French *raton laveur* means 'washing rat'.
- Raccoons have highly sensitive front paws – 10 times more than the human hand – due to having many nerve endings. They actually don't wash their food for cleanliness or digestion but to enhance their sense of touch, giving them more information about their food.



Western Spotted Skunk



Striped Skunk

Skunks

Where found:

Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*): Found throughout southern BC, particularly the Fraser Valley. Absent from coastal islands.

Western Spotted Skunk (*Spilogale gracilis*): Found in southwestern BC with the exception of the islands.

Description: About the size of a domestic cat, skunks are recognized by their distinctive, strong odour, bushy tail, and black and white markings. Striped skunks have two bold white stripes running along their black body, whereas spotted skunks have a combination of lines and spots along their backs.

Facts:

- As forests have been converted to industrial and residential areas, striped skunks have expanded their range and displaced the more forest-dwelling spotted skunks.
- Skunks are omnivores, feeding on insects, small vertebrates, (such as mice, voles, rabbit kits, small birds, small reptiles, and amphibians), roots, grains, fruit, and berries. In urban settings, they will eat pet food and garbage.



Bighorn Sheep

Ovis canadensis

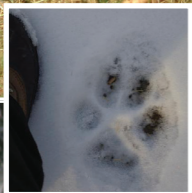
Where found:

Found in BC's Rocky and Coast Mountain ranges.

Description: Bighorn sheep are named for the large, curved horns of the rams (males). Ewes (females) also have horns, but they are shorter and straighter. These sheep have a stocky body, a light to dark brown coat, and a large, conspicuous white rump patch.

Facts:

- Male bighorn sheep have large horn cores and enlarged sinuses to protect the brain by absorbing the impact of clashes when rams butt heads.
- Bighorn sheep are considered good indicators of land health because the species is sensitive to many human-induced environmental problems such as habitat loss, disease transmission from livestock, unregulated hunting, and disturbance from recreation.
- Bighorn sheep graze on grasses and browse shrubs, and seek minerals at natural salt licks.
- The Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep is the provincial mammal of Alberta.



Grey Wolf

Canis lupus

Where found:

Found throughout BC, including on coastal islands.

Description: The wolf is the largest wild member of the dog family, *Canidae*, which also includes coyotes and foxes. The wolf's fur is usually mottled white, brown, grey, and black. Their ears are rounded and the tail is long. They are slender and powerfully built, with a large, deeply descending rib cage, a sloping back, and a heavily muscled neck.

Facts:

- The wolf is mainly a carnivore and feeds on large, wild, hoofed mammals as well as smaller animals, livestock, and carrion.
- The wolf's teeth are heavy and large, making them capable of crushing bone.
- The wolf can be a keystone species, a species with large effect on its natural environment. Without wolf predation, populations of herbivores, such as deer, increase and overgraze trees and shrubs.
- The sea wolf (*Canis lupus crassodon*) is a subspecies of gray wolf, endemic to the coast of the Pacific Northwest. They are unique due to their semi-aquatic lifestyle, which includes a diet that is almost entirely marine-based.



Wolverine

Gulo gulo

Where found:

Found throughout forested areas of BC, excluding coastal islands.

Description: Wolverines are a medium-sized (1 m long) carnivore and the largest terrestrial member of the weasel family in North America. They have long brown to black-coloured fur, often with a pale facial mask and yellowish or tan stripes running laterally from the shoulders, crossing just above the tail.

Facts:

- The wolverine's skull structure is particularly strong, allowing it to crush bones and consume frozen carcasses.
- Wolverines are primarily scavengers but will also hunt and kill prey as large as adult deer.
- The wolverine's reputation as having an insatiable appetite is reflected in its Latin name *Gulo*, meaning "glutton".
- Wolverines have thick, oily fur which repels water, and is resistant to frost. This has led to its traditional popularity as a lining for the hoods of parkas, where breath condenses.

Card list

- North American Badger
- Bats
- Black Bear
- Grizzly Bear
- Canadian Beaver
- Bison
- Bobcat & Canada Lynx
- Woodland Caribou
- Tree Squirrels
- Marmots
- Chipmunks
- Ground Squirrels
- Voles
- Cougar
- Coyote
- Deer
- Elk
- Fisher
- American Mink
- Martens
- Weasels
- Northwestern Deer Mouse
- Red Fox
- Mountain Goat
- Snowshoe Hare
- Moose
- North American River Otter
- Sea Otter
- North American Porcupine
- Raccoon
- Skunks
- Bighorn Sheep
- Grey Wolf
- Wolverine



10
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8
7
6
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1cm

