

Mammals are warm-blooded, vertebrate animals that grow hair and produce milk to nurse their young. Mammals indigenous to this area include:

ABERT'S SQUIRRELS- These small tree dwellers have distinctive tufts of hair on the tips of their ears. They eat Ponderosa Pine seeds and inner bark, and because of this they live only in Ponderosa Pine forests. Two color phases exist, and both live in this area. One is all black, and the other is gray with a white belly. The Kaibab Squirrels of the Grand Canyon area are believed to be descendants of Abert's Squirrels. Isolated by the desert, Kaibab Squirrels have developed different characteristics from the Abert's Squirrels.

BEAVERS- are thankfully, not common in this park. They feed on the tree bark of Aspen, Cottonwood, and Willow trees. They could devastate this park's trees in one season. Beavers are seen infrequently, and have damaged some trees. Therefore, the trunks of aspen and ornamental trees are wire protected from beavers. Our beavers live in the riverbank because there is not enough water in the river to make the familiar beaver dam and lodge necessary.

BIG BROWN BATS- are mammals that fly! Nearly blind, they find insects and navigate using their built-in radar, darting past floodlamps and streetlights to capture insects that are attracted to the light at night. Before sunrise, they return to roost in rock crevices and attics of buildings.

BIGHORN SHEEP- Colorado's State Animal, visit the slopes north of the picnic area regularly. Thanks to a 1982 transplant of 24 Rocky Mountain National Park rams and ewes by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, they are thriving again in this area. They were released from this park, but they live on the rugged slopes on the north side of the canyon from Drake to the mouth of the canyon. Big Horn Sheep are very susceptible to stress caused by people approaching them, so please watch them with binoculars, and avoid climbing their hillside.

BLACK BEARS- are seen in the park feeding on grasses in the Spring, and then ripening fruit through the season. Garbage containers must be closed on a daily basis from April through October to prevent bears from feeding on garbage.

BOBCATS- are short-tailed, and have ear tufts that are also short and inconspicuous. They are mostly nocturnal and solitary. They feed on small mammals and birds, and live in dens in rock crevices, hollow logs, or beneath downfalls. They may wander 25-50 miles, but usually stay within a 2 mile radius of their den. There are no dens in the Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park.

BUSHY-TAILED WOODRATS- are better known as packrats because of their behaviour of collecting whatever is handy, including bones, paper, bottle caps, etc. to pack into their nests. The nests are located in rock crevices, underneath buildings, or wherever there is room. Telltale signs of their presence include bits of paper near a hole in the wall of a cabin, and 1/4 inch long mouse-like droppings on rock ledges or window sills. Mexican Woodrats also live in this area.

CHIPMUNKS- are small squirrels that prefer to live on the hillside south of the river. These colorful park residents are light brown with black and white stripes on their head and back. Although they primarily eat seeds, they sometimes eat the inner bark of Willow twigs and, in the process, they cut off and drop dozens of small twigs. Two species of Chipmunk live in this area. The Least Chipmunk grows to six inches long, and the Colorado Chipmunk grows to ten inches in length.

COTTONTAIL RABBITS- are brownish or grayish colored with a cotton white tail. They live in thickets, sagebrush, loose rocks, forests, and cliffs of mountains. They will spend the day in partially concealed form, burrow in the ground, or beneath a brush pile. They feed on green vegetation in the summer months, and bark or twigs in the winter.

Continued Inside...

For further information about mammals in the area, please contact the Mountain Parks Office at (970) 667-5181.

Some excerpts and images courtesy of "Peterson Field Guides - Mammals" by William H. Burt and Richard P. Grossenheider.

Helpful Field Guides:

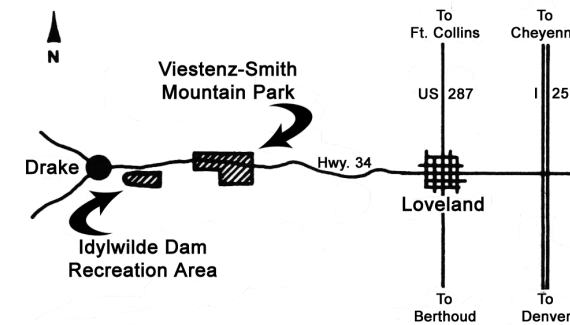
"A Field Guide to Animal Tracks" by Olaus J. Murie

"A Field Guide to the Mammals of America North of Mexico" by William H. Burt, and Richard P. Grossenheider

"Mammals - A Golden Nature Guide" by Zim, Hoffmeister

"Rocky Mountain Mammals" by David M. Armstrong

"Wild Mammals of Colorado" by R.R. Lechleitner



All plants, animals, and other natural features are protected by park regulation against removal, destruction, and injury.

Please observe posted hours, and rules & regulations of the park. For further general park information, or to inquire about a reservation for an area in the park, please call the Admin. Office at (970) 962-2727.



Provided by the City of Loveland
Parks and Recreation Department
Mountain Parks Division
www.CityofLoveland.org

Mammals

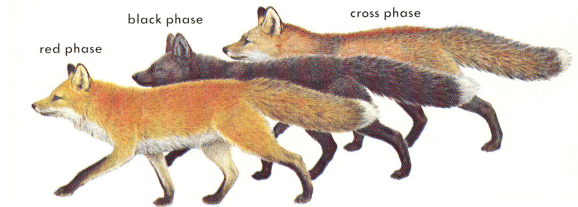
of Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park



LONGTAIL WEASEL



BEAVER



RED FOX



blue phase cinnamon phase black phase
BLACK BEAR

**An Introduction to
Common Mammals of the Area**

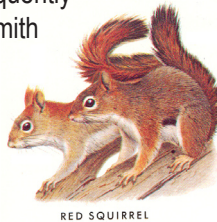
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COYOTES- sometimes pass through the park as they scour the hills for food. They are 20-50 pound “dogs” with greyish-brown fur, and they eat almost anything. Coyotes are generally shy of people, and will stay away from places people go. Their tracks are very similar to domestic dog tracks. They often go unnoticed until a lucky person sees ones, or a group of Coyotes howl during the night.

DEER MICE- the most widely distributed and most variable of members of the genus. Colors range from pale grayish buff to deep redish brown. Tail always sharply bicolored, white below, dark above. Usually have white bellies and feet. Nests in burrows in the ground, in trees, stumps, and buildings. Feeds on seeds, nuts, acorns, insects, and stores food. Rarely lives more than two years in the wild, 5-8 years in captivity. Females may be territorial during breeding season (usually Feb.-Nov.), and have 2-4 litters per year with 3-5 young each time.

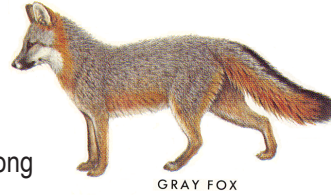
EASTERN FOX OR RED SQUIRRELS- are similar squirrel species. The **Eastern Fox Squirrel** is 10-15 inches long, and can be found wherever nut trees are located in the park. It is a rusty yellowish color with a pale yellow to orange belly, and a bushy tail. It will bury nuts singly, and may not return for them. The **Red Squirrel** is the most frequently seen wild mammal at Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park. It is 7-8 inches long, and is the noisy squirrel that is usually heard before it is seen. It is uniformly yellowish or redish colored, paler on the back in the winter, and has a black line down the side in the summer, with a whitish belly. It will store cones and nuts in caches, not singly. Both species will nest in trees, and forage for a great variety of seeds, nuts, eggs, fungi, etc. in their areas.

GOLDEN MANTLED GROUND SQUIRRELS- are 6-8 inches long, with a chipmunk-like coloring. They have a coppery head, a white stripe down the side



that is bordered with black, but no stripes on the sides of the face. They feed on seeds, fruits, insects, eggs, meat, and store food. They burrow near bushes, trees, rocks, and logs, and hibernate from October-November.

GRAY FOXES- are 21-29 inches long, have a pepper and salt colored coat with buffy underfur, and a long bushy tail, with a median black stripe down its total length. They have rusty yellow sides of the neck, backs of ears, legs and feet. They are chiefly nocturnal and secretive, and will climb trees to escape enemies. They eat small mammals, and will supplement their diets with insects, fruit, acorns, birds, and eggs. They create dens in hollow logs, beneath boulders, or sometimes in ground burrow. No dens are in this park.



LITTLE BROWN MYOTIS (BAT)- are nocturnal flying mammals that feed on insects near water or forests from dusk to dawn. Most migrate south in the fall, and hibernate in caves or other retreats. They generally live in caves, mines, tunnels, hollow trees, or buildings that serve as roosting places.

LONG-TAILED WEASELS- are slightly smaller than their close cousin, the Mink. Their coat is brown during the summer, and unlike the Mink, it changes to white during the winter. Long-tailed Weasels, in winter, look like they are playing as they tunnel through and jump over snow in search of mice and other small rodents.

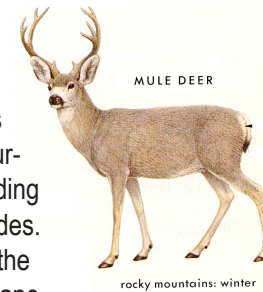
MINKS- are 20 inch long weasels that are distant cousins of the skunk and otters, and travel along rivers and streams in search of small mammals, birds, eggs, fish, and frogs. They are year-round residents here, but because they travel in the water and on river rocks at night, their tracks in the snow are usually the only evidence of their presence.

MONTANE VOLES- are six inch long, mouse-like grass eaters that construct tunnels of grass clippings

leading to nests and feeding areas. The paths are most noticeable in the tall grasses, but during the winter they extend into our picnic area turf. As the snows melt, you can easily see the tunnels in the area west of the parking lot. The Heather Vole, another area resident, prefers to eat tree bark instead of grass.

MOUNTAIN LIONS- are also known as Cougars or Pumas, and occasionally travel through the park while hunting across their large territories. Frequent sightings by canyon residents suggest they are more common than expected, but their secretive nature keeps people guessing. Mountain Lions feed primarily on deer, ambushing the unsuspecting deer from hiding places along game trails.

MULE DEER- are very common in this area. At night they dine on lush grass in the valley bottom, while during the day they retreat to hiding places up on the mountainsides. Sometimes, during autumn, the young bucks (male deer) scrape their antlers on our Aspen trees. This strips the bark off, which can kill the tree. Look for tracks along the river and on our trails, and look for scraped Aspen trees west of the pond.



MUSKRATS- inhabit the tailrace pond in our park. They look like foot-long beavers with narrow tails. Like beaver, they sometimes build lodges, but they primarily dig dens into pond and stream banks. Unlike beaver, muskrats eat water plants, small fish, and snails.

PORCUPINE- are another animal that could severely damage picnic area trees. A porcupine eats the inner bark of pine trees, and can spend up to a week in one tree if it finds a tasty one. Trees attacked by porcupines are most noticeable on the north side of the canyon throughout this area. Look for trees whose outer and upper branches appear bright yellow where the bark has been eaten off.

RACOONS- visit our picnic areas every night during

spring, summer, and autumn. They eat nearly anything, and search extensively for it, so evidence of their nightly activities can be found almost everywhere. The best place to find their tracks is at the water's edge around the pond where they search for fish and snails overnight. These bandits open the trash can lids and dine on your discarded food, scattering trash in the process. In winter, raccoons are active, but retreat to dens during cold spells.

RED FOXES- have the appearance of a small dog, are normally reddish yellow, darkest on the back, with a white belly and a bushy tail mixed with black hairs and tipped with white. Legs and feet are black. They eat a mix of small mammals, insects, berries, and fruit. Dens are created on slopes in porous soil, and they are known to have many dens, in case they have to move on short notice. No dens are in the park.

ROCK SQUIRRELS- are a burrowing, ground dwelling squirrel often seen or heard in this area. They normally live in and around warm, rocky slopes and let out a loud, one-note, high pitched “bark” at frequent intervals when an intruder is near their territory. You can distinguish these squirrels from others in the park by their dull, brown fur, and their thin tails.

SPOTTED OR STRIPED SKUNKS- are two nocturnal species of skunk that nest in ground burrows, beneath abandoned buildings, boulders, wood piles, etc. They feed on mice, insects, eggs, carrion, and berries. They are beneficial for destroying many small rodents and insects. The **Spotted Skunk** is black with a white spot on the forehead, 1 under each ear, and with four broken white stripes along the neck, back and sides. Tail has a white tip. The **Striped Skunk** is the one most people picture when they think of a skunk. It is the size of a house cat, and has a narrow white strip up the middle of the forehead and continues into a broad white area on the nape which splits to a V shape near the shoulders continuing back to the base of the bushy tail, which may/may not have a white tip.

