

# North Carolina's Candid Critters Field Guide

THE KEY TO ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION IN NORTH CAROLINA





# Table of Contents

<b>Page</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Species</b>
4	White-tailed Deer	18	Eastern Chipmunk
5	Northern Raccoon	19	Eastern Gray Squirrel
6	Virginia Opossum	20	Eastern Fox Squirrel
7	Eastern Cottontail	21	Southern Flying Squirrel
8	Black Bear	22	Striped Skunk
9	Wild Turkey	23	Eastern Spotted Skunk
10	Woodchuck	24	Red Fox
11	Long-tailed Weasel	25	Grey Fox
12	American Mink	26	Coyote
13	Northern River Otter	27	Red Wolf
14	Muskrat	28	Bobcat
15	Nutria	29	Domestic Cat
16	Armadillo	30	Domestic Dog
17	Wild Boar	31	Extinct from North Carolina



# Refer to this guide...

when learning the mammal species of North Carolina or when you are unsure of the identification of a mammal in a photo.

## Icon Key

### Habitat:

towns and cities



marsh



cropland



open field



forest



### Geography:



Present statewide



Present in the Mountain and Piedmont Regions



Present in the Mountain Region



Present in Mountain and Coastal Regions



Present in the Piedmont and Coastal Regions

### Conservation status:

**Least Concern:** Common

**Critically Endangered:** Very few individuals left

**Extirpated:** extinct (died out) in an area



# White-tailed Deer

Scientific name: *Odocoileus virginianus*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Tan to reddish-brown coat**

**Brown tails with white underside**

**White underbellies**

**Fawns (young deer) have white spots**

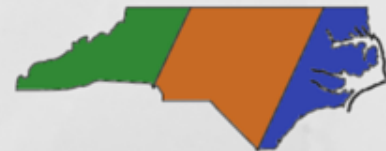
**Males have antlers during summer,  
but shed antlers in winter**



## Adult antlers on male



Fawns with  
spots





# Northern Raccoon

**Scientific name:** *Procyon lotor*

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Ringed tail**

**Mask-like patches around eyes**

**Black or gray fur, but can be red or brown**

**Has a hunched back pose**

**Found near water**

**Climbs trees**



Ringed tail



Hunched  
pose



Bandit-like  
mask on face





# Virginia Opossum

Scientific name: *Didelphis virginiana*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Scruffy gray and white fur**

**White head with pointed, pink snout**

**Pink, furless tail**

**Small, leathery, hairless ears**

**Sometimes feigns death**

**North America's only marsupial**

White,  
pointed head



Pink, furless tail





# Eastern Cottontail

Scientific name: *Sylvilagus floridanus*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Brown or gray fur with white underbellies**

**Large hind feet, long ears, short fluffy white tail**

**May have white patches or markings on their face**

**Kits (babies) have a white streak on head that disappears as they grow up**

**Prefers open habitats**



**Short fluffy tail**  
(Difficult to see in most photos)



**White underbellies**



# American Black Bear

Scientific name: *Ursus americanus*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Dark brown or black fur, but also brown or tan**

**Small, round ears set far back on the head**

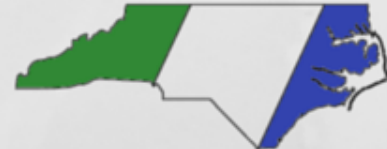
**Can have lighter-colored muzzles**

**Can have white patches on chest**

**Sometimes seen in suburban areas**



some have lighter colored muzzles





# Wild Turkey

Scientific name: *Meleagris gallopavo*

Conservation Status: Least Concern

NOT a mammal, but often caught on camera traps



Distinctive Marks

**Dark-feathered with some white feathers**

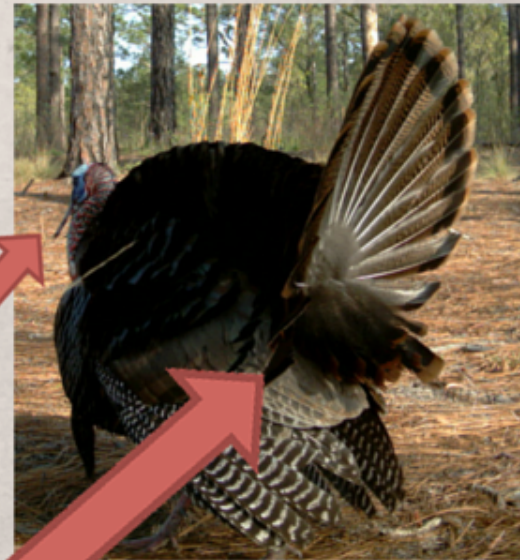
**Long, featherless legs**

**Slim, featherless head and neck**

**Neck color ranges from red to blue**

**Travel in flocks typically**

**Males typically have beard and large fan of feathers**



Male with  
beard and  
fan of  
feathers





# Woodchuck or Groundhog

Scientific name: *Marmota monax*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



coarse  
gray/brown  
coat



## Distinctive Marks

**Large and chunky bodied with stubby tails**

**Coarse gray or brown coat**

**Black feet with powerful legs**

**Dark, broad, and flat heads**

**Often found in open areas in suburban areas**



broad,  
flat head





# Long-tailed Weasel

Scientific name: *Mustela frenata*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



Distinctive Marks

**Long, dark-tipped tail**

**Long and slender body**

**Dark brown fur**

**White underbelly**

**In the north, fur turns white in the winter**

**Has white fur on their front and/or back legs**



White  
underbelly



Long,  
slender body



# American Mink

Scientific name: *Neovison vison*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Thick, dark brown fur**

**Sleek bodies with a long neck**

**Mostly brown, but small patches of white on chin and throat**

**Long tail that does not get thinner throughout**



Sleek body with long neck





# Northern River Otter

Scientific name: *Lontra canadensis*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Thick, dark brown coat**

**Has silver or white chin and throat**

**Long tail that gets thinner at the tip**

**Largest of the weasel-like animals**

**Very small ears**

**Most often seen in water**

**Social**



Lives in  
groups



# Muskrat

**Scientific name:** *Ondatra zibethicus*

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Tail is half the length of its body**

**Short, thick, black or brown fur**

**Belly fur is a lighter shade**

**Slightly flattened tail**

**Drag tail while they walk**



Lighter belly fur

Slightly  
flattened tail





# Nutria

**Scientific name:** *Myocastor caypus*

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**White patch on the muzzle**

**Webbed hind feet**

**Long, thin, round, hairy tail**

**Brown coat**

**Larger than the muskrat**

**Invasive species**



**Long, thin, round,  
hairy tail**





# Nine-banded Armadillo

Scientific name: *Dasypus novemcinctus*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Nine bands of armor in the middle of its body**

**Striped armored tail**

**Long snout**

**Grey coloration**

**Looks hairless, but has thin hair**

**No established population in NC, but expanding range northward**



Long snout



Armored  
body



# Wild Boar

Scientific name: *Sus scrofa*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Piglets have defined brown stripes**

**Adults are usually brown, but  
there is variation**

**Large body, thin legs**

**Massive, broad snout**

**Males tend to have a mane**



Massive,  
broad snout



Striped  
piglets





# Eastern Chipmunk

Scientific name: *Tamias striatus*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Pale brown to chestnut color coat**

**Five dark brown stripes down back**

**Two white stripes down back**

**Long, dark brown tail**

**Light fur around eyes**

**Among smallest mammal detected on camera traps, so can be difficult to find in the photograph**



Long, thin  
brown tail



Two white and  
five dark brown  
stripes down  
sides





# Eastern Gray Squirrel

Scientific name: *Sciurus carolinensis*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Gray, but also red-brown**

**White belly**

**Large, bushy tail**

**Small ears**

**Tail is nearly as long as body**

**Bushy tail  
nearly as long  
as body**





# Eastern Fox Squirrel

Scientific name: *Sciurus niger*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Variety of colors including black, brown, and gray**

**Bushier tail than the Eastern Gray Squirrel**

**Larger than Eastern Gray Squirrel**

**Often have black and white markings on their faces**



Bushier tail  
than gray  
squirrel



# Southern Flying Squirrel

Scientific name: *Glaucomys volans*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Has a parachute-like membrane connected to its ankles and wrists that lets it glide through air**

**Smaller than gray and fox squirrel**

**Has a less bushy tail than gray and fox squirrel**



Parachute-like membrane



Less bushy tail than gray or fox squirrel





# Striped Skunk

Scientific name: *Mephitis mephitis*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Pair of stripes running down back**

**Stripes typically meet in a V at the back of the neck**

**Bushy, black tail**

**Tail sometimes has white tip**

**Spray as a form of defense**

**Raises tail and stomps before spraying**



Pair of  
stripes meet  
in V at back  
of neck

Bushy  
tail





# Eastern Spotted Skunk

Scientific name: *Spilogale putorius*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Bushy, black tail with white tip**

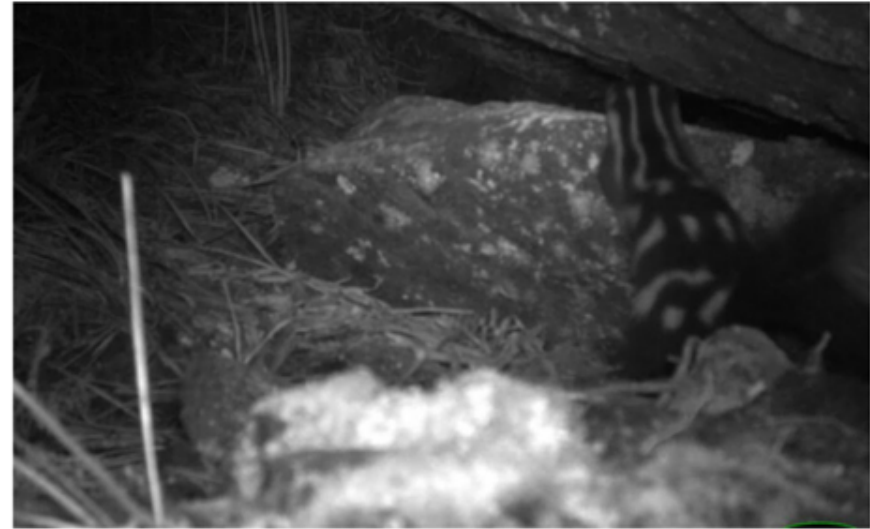
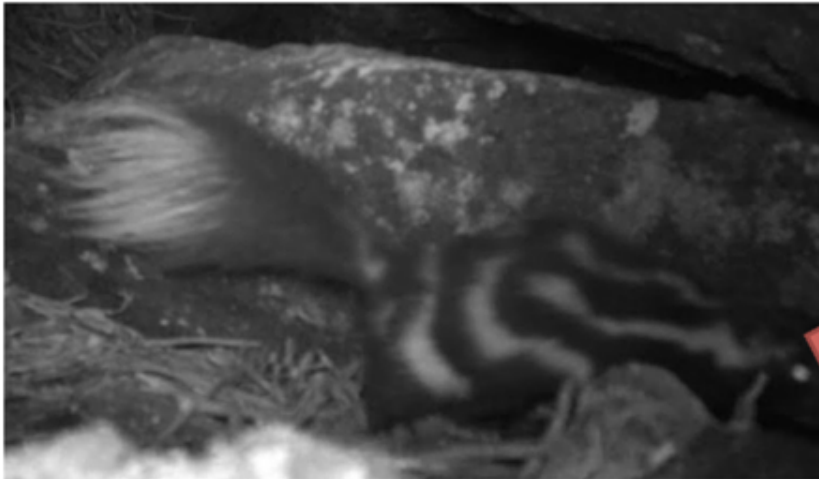
**Thin white stripes and spots in black coat**

**Smaller than the striped skunk**

**Performs a handstand before spraying**

**Species of interest, not often detected**

Bushy black  
tail with  
white tip



Thin white  
stripes



# Red Fox

Scientific name: *Vulpes vulpes*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Usually red, but can be gray or black**

**White-tipped tail**

**Black legs**

**Black ear tips**

**Dog-like face**

White-tipped tail

Black legs





# Grey Fox

**Scientific name:** *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Gray fur, but can also have red or brown**

**Black stripe down back**

**Black-tipped tail**

**More cat-like face than red fox or coyote**



**Black-tipped tail**



**Cat-like face**





# Coyote

Scientific name: *Canis latrans*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Varied coloration, typically gray, brown, or black**

**Long limbs, ears, and snout**

**Larger and taller than foxes**

**Long, fluffy tail**

**Dog-like face**

Long, fluffy  
tail



Dog-like  
face





# Bobcat

Scientific name: *Lynx rufus*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Tan to reddish-brown coat**

**Spots and streaks on fur**

**Very short "bobbed" tail with white**

**Short ears with black tufts of fur on tips**

**Larger than a domestic cat, smaller than a puma**



Bobbed tail  
with white

Black fur on ear  
tips





# Domestic Cat

Scientific name: *Felis catus*

Conservation Status: Least Concern



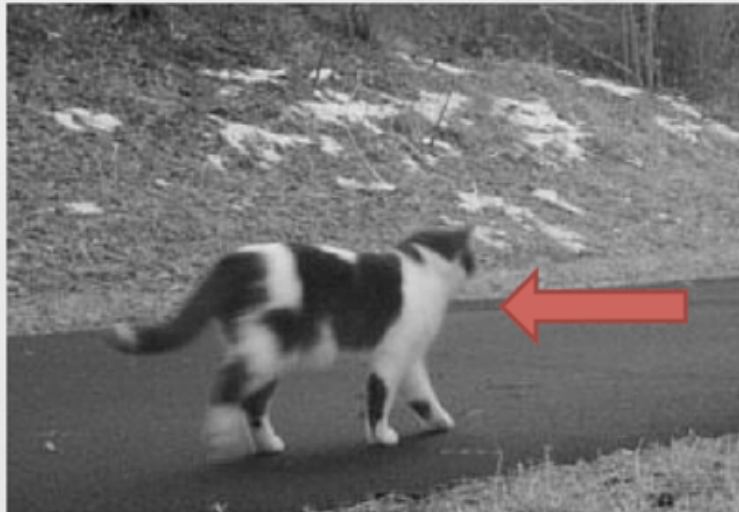
Distinctive Marks

**Can be any variety of house cat**

**Look for a collar, but there isn't always one**

**Variety of coat colorations**

**Smaller bodied than bobcat, fox, or puma**



may not  
have collar





# Domestic Dog

**Scientific name:** *Canis lupus familiaris*

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern



## Distinctive Marks

**Can be any variety of pet dog**

**Look for a collar, but there isn't always one**

**Variety of coat colorations**

**Often accompanied by a human being**



may not have  
collar



# Gray Wolf

Scientific name: *Canis lupus*

Conservation Status: **EXTIRPATED FROM NORTH CAROLINA**

## Location Information

**Currently found all over Asia, Canada, northern Europe, and some populations remain in Western and Midwestern United States**

## Distinctive Marks

**Larger and thicker bodied than coyotes  
Longer tail, shorter ears, shorter torso,  
and broader snout than coyotes  
Gray to black fur, rather than the  
brown tint that coyotes have**

larger and  
thicker  
bodied than  
coyotes





# Mountain Lion, Cougar or Puma

Scientific name: *Puma concolor*

Conservation Status: **EXTIRPATED FROM NORTH CAROLINA**

Location Information

**Currently in western North America and South America**

Distinctive Marks

**Fourth largest cat behind lions, tigers, and jaguars  
(larger than bobcat)**

**Has a round head, tan fur, and powerful front legs**

**Has a longer tail around 2.0-3.0 ft. long**



tail  
length  
around  
2-3 ft  
long



# Red Wolf

Scientific name: *Canis rufus*

Conservation Status: **Critically endangered**

Reintroduced (1987) to coastal NC



## Distinctive Marks

**Intermediate in size between the coyote and gray wolf**

**Larger ears than coyote**

**Reddish, tawny to gray fur**

**Light markings around mouth**

**World's most endangered canid (Population: -50+ in wild,  
~200 in captive breeding facilities)**



Light markings  
around mouth



Reddish, tawny to gray fur

\*Range restricted to Washington, Tyrrell, Dare, Beaufort, and Hyde counties





# Albinism and Melanism

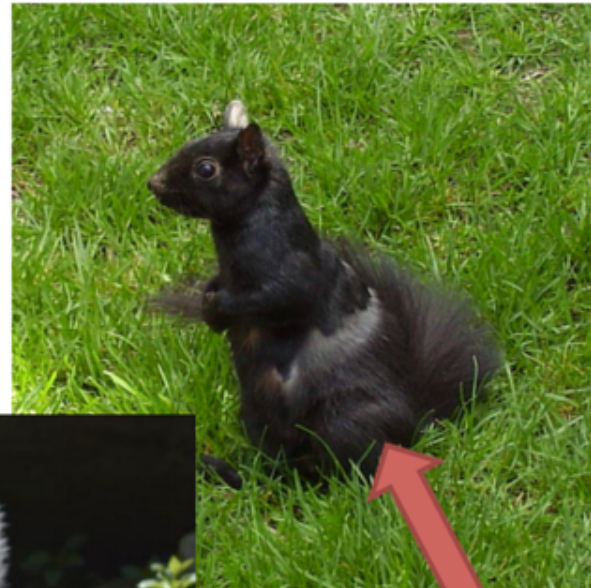
**Albinism:** a skin condition where little to no pigment or melanin is produced

**Melanism:** a skin condition where an excess of pigment or melanin is produced

**Any mammal can be albino or melanistic. It is possible that your camera trap will capture animals that fit this description. It is quite rare and very interesting to see!**



Albino



Melanistic



# Photo Credits:

eMammal

United States Department of Agriculture

National Geographic: Your Shot

IUCN Red List

Backyard Beasts, John Van Niel

