

# GENET

CARD 50

GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER  
Carnivora

FAMILY  
Viverridae

GENUS & SPECIES  
*Genetta genetta*



**The genet is a nocturnal hunter. Its razor-sharp, retractable claws enable it to snare its prey. It is also a good climber and often climbs trees to catch birds.**

## KEY FACTS



**SIZES**  
**Length:** Head and body, 16-24 in.  
Tail, 15-21 in.  
**Weight:** 2-6 lb.



**BREEDING**  
**Sexual maturity:** 4 years.  
**Mating season:** Year-round.  
Sometimes 2 litters produced in a single year.  
**Gestation:** 10-11 weeks.  
**No. of young:** 1-4, usually 2-3.



**LIFESTYLE**  
**Habit:** Generally solitary, occasionally seen in pairs.  
**Diet:** Small rodents, birds, insects, and some fruit.  
**Lifespan:** 5-15 years.



**RELATED SPECIES**  
There are 10 species of genet grouped in 3 genera. Civets and mongooses belong to the same family. The common genet is the only species found outside Africa.



■ Range of the genet.

### DISTRIBUTION

The common genet is found over a large area of Africa, as well as Spain, Portugal, southern France, and parts of the Middle East.

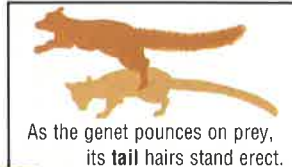
### CONSERVATION

It is not known how many genets live in the wild. It has been hunted by native tribes but does not appear to be in danger of extinction.

## FEATURES OF THE GENET

**Large ears:** Aid in detecting the faintest sounds that might indicate location of prey.

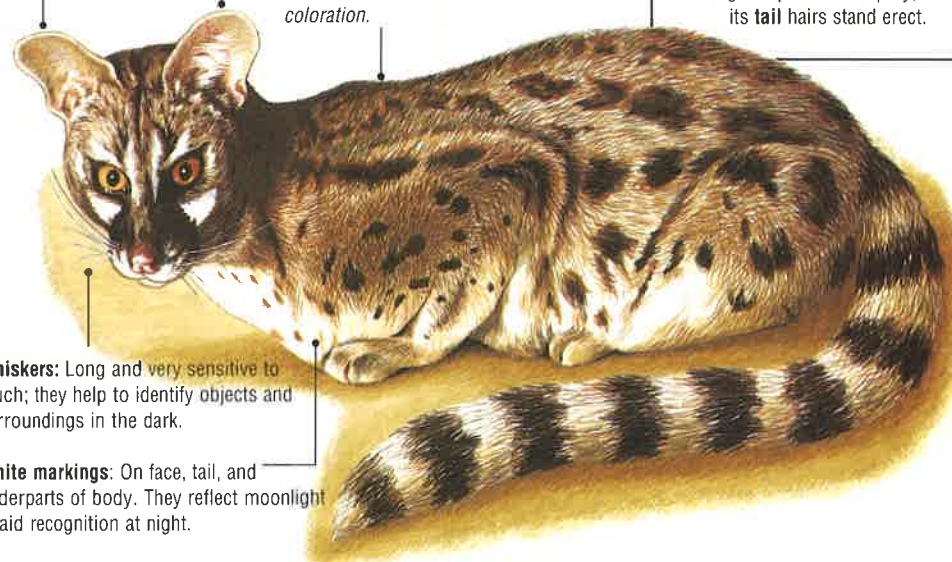
**Coat color and markings:** Pale fur has dark blotches, spots, or stripes that act as camouflage as the genet hunts. This is called *cryptic coloration*.



As the genet pounces on prey, its tail hairs stand erect.

**Whiskers:** Long and very sensitive to touch; they help to identify objects and surroundings in the dark.

**White markings:** On face, tail, and underparts of body. They reflect moonlight to aid recognition at night.





*The genet belongs to the same family as the mongoose but shares many characteristics with the domestic cat. Varying slightly in color, genets have spotted, blotched, or striped markings and a graceful, catlike build. The long, bushy tail accounts for nearly half the animal's length.*



### HABITAT

The genet has adapted to a variety of habitats within its range. It can live in semidesert, forest, scrubland, grassland, and savannah.

During the day the genet sleeps in hollow trees or

crevices. Its spotted fur provides good camouflage, so that it blends in with the surroundings. Active by night, the genet seems to return to the same lair near dawn every day.

### BREEDING

The male and female genet come together only to mate. Although most pairs mate when seasonal rains occur, those living in temperate ranges mate year-round. More prey is available after the rains, which means that food is plentiful for the newborn. In southern parts of the genet's range, the female may bear two litters a year.

The female makes a nest in a hollow tree or among rocks, and the young are born there. They are blind at birth but open their eyes after 5 to 12 days. Their mother provides solid

food for them at two months of age. The female is fiercely protective of her young.

At nine months the young can hunt for themselves, but they are not fully grown until they are two years old. They become sexually mature at four years of age.

**Right:** *The blotched or rusty-spotted genet (Genetta tigrina) lives south of the Sahara Desert, often in moist, marshy habitats.*

**Left:** *A genet descends from its lair at night to hunt.*



### FOOD & HUNTING

The genet is primarily a *carnivore* (meat eater). It eats most small animals, including rodents, birds, and insects. It hunts at night, with nocturnal moths and beetles being common prey.

The genet emerges from its lair at dusk to hunt. It moves stealthily, keeping low to the ground, with its tail stuck straight out behind.

The genet stalks its prey in much the same way that a domestic cat does. It first crouches, with its belly flattened on the ground. As the animal pounces on its prey, the hairs on its bushy tail stand erect, and the genet begins to purr loudly.

A skillful climber, the genet often scales trees to catch nesting and roosting birds. In summer, when fruit is abundant, the genet adds pears and figs to its regular diet. It returns to familiar hunting grounds at about the same time each year.



**Above:** *The genet uses its acute hearing to locate prey.*

**Inset:** *Its thick, bushy tail helps the genet keep its balance on a tree trunk.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

- One rare breed of African genet has rarely been seen in the wild. Almost all that is known about it is based on examination of skins collected by pygmy hunters.
- The genet, like the weasel, was once domesticated in Europe to control plagues of rodents.
- The slender and loosely jointed body of a genet enables it to squeeze through any opening its head fits through.
- Studies of the genet in captivity show that it uses a combination of touch, smell, hearing, memory, and eyesight to find its way at night.



# DROMEDARY CAMEL

CARD 51

GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER  
*Artiodactyla*

FAMILY  
*Camelidae*

GENUS & SPECIES  
*Camelus dromedarius*



**The dromedary camel has lived in the deserts of western Asia for thousands of years. Its single hump contains a reserve of fat, not water.**

## KEY FACTS



### SIZES

**Height:** To shoulder, 6-7 ft. To hump, 6-8 ft.

**Length:** Body, 7-11 ft. Tail, up to 2 ft.

**Weight:** 1,000-1,500 lb.



### BREEDING

**Sexual maturity:** 5 years.

**Breeding season:** Varies; timed for birth to coincide with maximum plant growth.

**Gestation:** 370-440 days.

**No. of young:** 1.



### LIFESTYLE

**Habit:** Forms groups of up to 30 animals.

**Diet:** Any available vegetation.

**Lifespan:** 17-50 years.



### RELATED SPECIES

There are 2 genera in the family *Camelidae*, both of which have 2 species. The only other species of camel is the two-humped Bactrian, *Camelus bactrianus*.



Original range of the dromedary camel.

### DISTRIBUTION

Thought to have originated on the Arabian Peninsula. Present domesticated range extends from northern Africa and across central Asia to Mongolia and Australia.

### CONSERVATION

The dromedary camel thrives as a domesticated animal and in a semiwild state. It has probably not existed as a wild species for several hundred years.

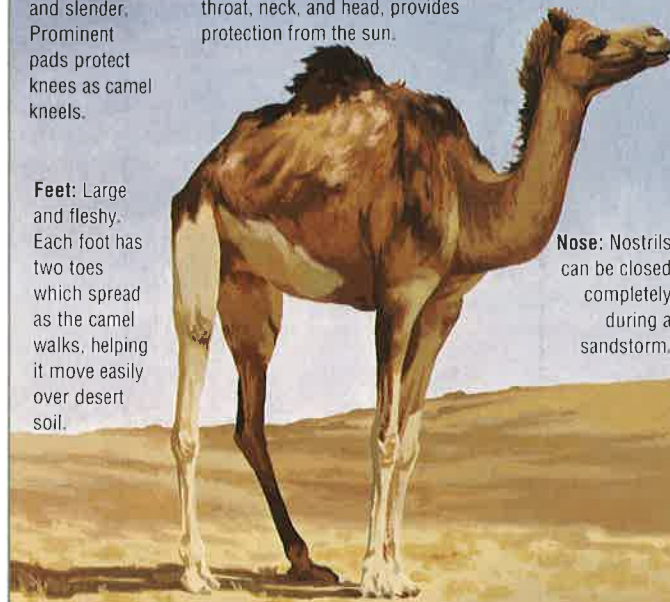
## FEATURES OF THE DROMEDARY CAMEL

**Legs:** Long and slender. Prominent pads protect knees as camel kneels.

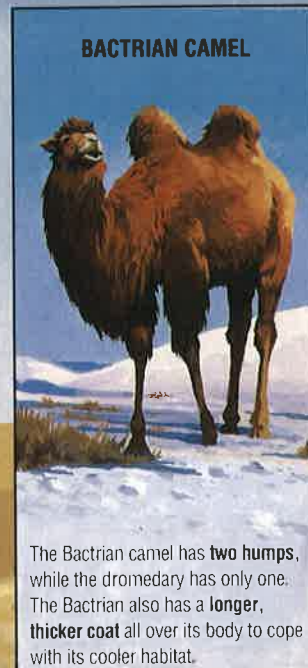
**Feet:** Large and fleshy. Each foot has two toes which spread as the camel walks, helping it move easily over desert soil.

**Hair:** Fine, woolly hair on hump, throat, neck, and head, provides protection from the sun.

**Nose:** Nostrils can be closed completely during a sandstorm.



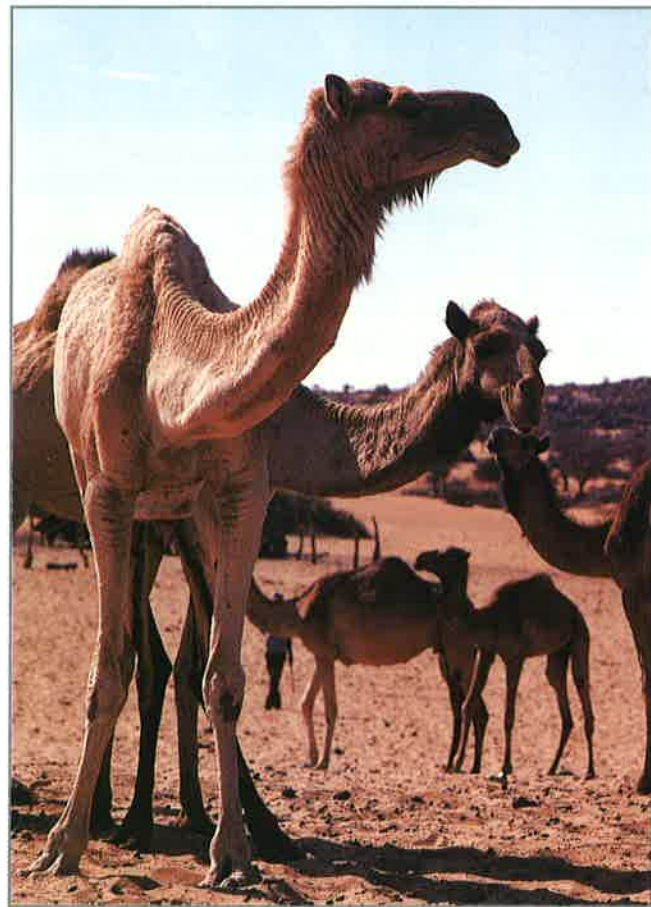
## BACTRIAN CAMEL



The Bactrian camel has **two humps**, while the dromedary has only one. The Bactrian also has a **longer, thicker coat** all over its body to cope with its cooler habitat.



*The dromedary camel has been domesticated for so long that there are no records of its life as a wild animal. Perfectly adapted for the hot, dry climate of the desert, it plays a vital role in the life of the nomads.*



**FOOD & FEEDING**

The dromedary camel *ruminates* (chews food again after swallowing it). It eats almost any vegetation in the desert, including the thorny twigs and salty plants that other desert dwellers cannot tolerate. Domesticated dromedaries are fed dates, grains, and grasses. When food is scarce, the camels will even eat fish and the flesh of other animals. When food is plentiful, the camel overeats and stores the excess as fat in its hump, which becomes plump and erect. When food is scarce, the camel lives on the stored fat. The hump then shrinks and may even flop to one side.



Left: The camel's long legs and large feet make it ideal for traveling across the soft sands of the desert.

Above: The dromedary camel can eat a variety of vegetation that other animals could not tolerate or survive on.

**BREEDING**

The female dromedary *comes into heat* (becomes ready to mate) several times a year. This gives her a better chance of giving birth during the unpredictable rainy season, when there is plenty of vegetation for her young. The male camel becomes aggressive during mating season. He also performs a noisy breeding display to attract females.

The female stands as she gives birth to a single *calf* (young). It is born with its eyes open and is covered in a soft, woolly fleece. Within two to three hours the calf can walk. By the end of its first day, it moves about quickly and freely. The young suckles for at least a year. It remains dependent on its mother until it is four years old.



**DROMEDARY CAMEL & MAN**

The dromedary camel has been important to people in the deserts of western Asia and North Africa. For thousands of years the camel has pulled plows in fields, turned water wheels to irrigate crops, and provided transportation for people and goods.

The camel is also a source for food, clothing, and shelter. Its flesh is edible, and the females provide milk for drinking and making into cheese. The camel's woolly fleece is woven into clothes, blankets, and tents, and its hide is cured to make leather.

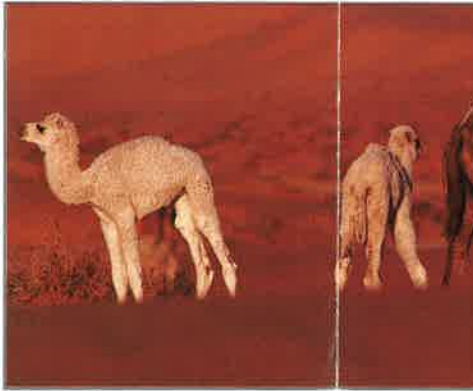
**DID YOU KNOW?**

- Camels are the only mammals that have oval, rather than circular, red blood corpuscles.
- Camels often spit when something annoys them.
- The dromedary is sometimes known as the "ship of the desert." This is partly because of its rolling walk, but also because it is the main transportation for crossing the desert.
- In very hot weather, a camel that has not drunk any water for a long time can drink up to 50 gallons at a time.

**CHARACTERISTICS**

The dromedary camel is well adapted to cope with the extreme climate and harsh terrain of the desert. Its adaptations include hairy ears and heavy eyebrows with long eyelashes that protect the ears and eyes from the sun and blowing sand.

Dromedaries in the Sahara can go through the entire winter without taking a drink. This is because the camel loses very little water in its feces and urine. It can tolerate a lot of water loss and does not sweat until its body temperature becomes very high.



Above right: Nomadic tribesmen herd camels across the desert in Sudan.

Left: Young camels rely on their mother's rich milk to provide all their nutrients.



# SPRING HARE

CARD 52

GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER  
Rodentia

FAMILY  
Pedetidae

GENUS & SPECIES  
*Pedetes capensis*



The spring hare is approximately the size of a large rabbit and somewhat resembles a kangaroo. Its powerful hind legs enable it to leap distances of 30 feet.

## KEY FACTS



### SIZES

Length: Body, 14-17 in.  
Tail, 16-20 in.  
Weight: 6-9 lb.



### BREEDING

**Sexual maturity:** Not known, probably 1 year.  
**Mating:** Year-round, 1 or 2 births per female each year.  
**Gestation:** 77 days.  
**No. of young:** 1.



### LIFESTYLE

**Habit:** Males solitary in burrows; females live with young. Forage in small groups of 2 to 6.  
**Diet:** Grasses, roots, tubers, and seeds. In cultivated areas, eats peanuts, corn, and wheat.  
**Lifespan:** 14 years in captivity.



### RELATED SPECIES

None in the same family. Scaly-tailed squirrels are thought to be its closest relatives.



Range of the spring hare.

### DISTRIBUTION

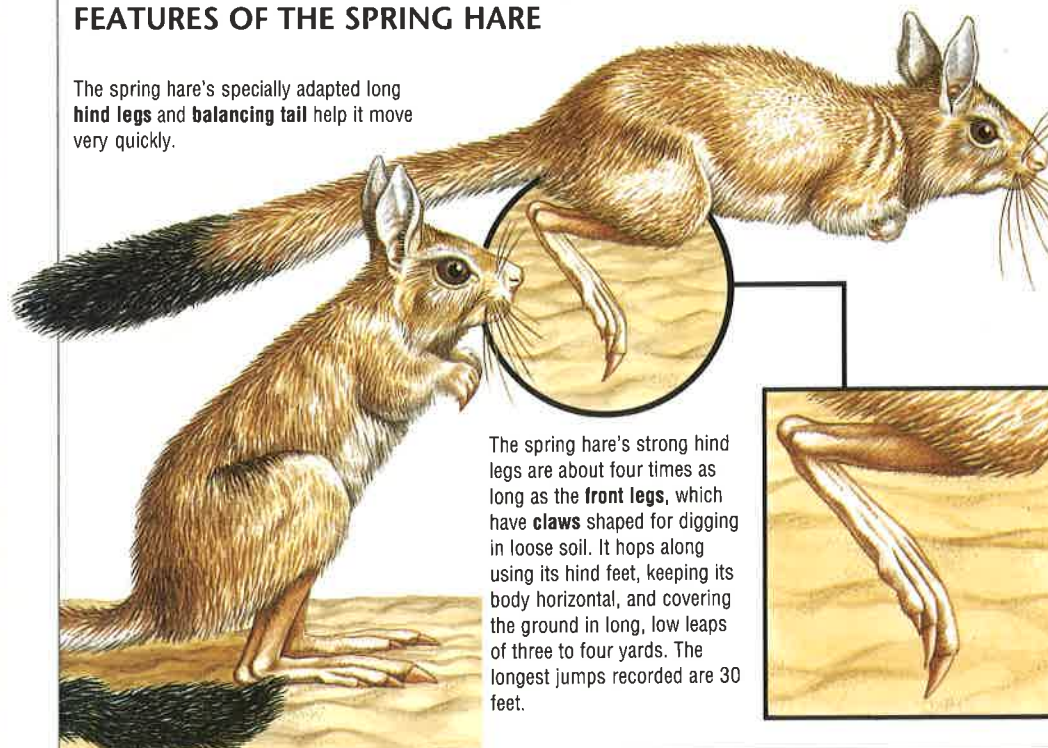
Throughout eastern and southern Africa on dry steppes, grasslands, and flood plains.

### CONSERVATION

Conservation measures are not necessary as spring hares are numerous and widespread over most of their range. However, numbers have decreased in areas where food is scarce due to overgrazing by domestic livestock.

## FEATURES OF THE SPRING HARE

The spring hare's specially adapted long **hind legs** and **balancing tail** help it move very quickly.



The spring hare's strong hind legs are about four times as long as the **front legs**, which have **claws** shaped for digging in loose soil. It hops along using its hind feet, keeping its body horizontal, and covering the ground in long, low leaps of three to four yards. The longest jumps recorded are 30 feet.





*Spring hares live in burrows on the*

*open grasslands of eastern and southern Africa.*

*The origins of this rodent are a mystery—after first being classified with jerboas and later with porcupines, they are now thought to be distantly related to scaly-tailed squirrels.*

#### HABITAT

Spring hares live on fairly dry ground throughout their range, preferring areas where the loose, sandy soil makes it easy for them to dig their burrows. They are commonly found on flood plains where water accumulated during the rainy season nourishes the grass. Although herds of large grazing animals eat the majority of the grass, the hares are small enough to survive on the stubble that remains.

The hare digs its burrow in well-drained soil. The main

entrance is distinguished by a mound of excavated soil that is used to block the entrance after the hare retreats into its burrow.

The hare may have dug as many as 10 side holes to escape through if a predator enters the burrow. Predators include snakes, large owls, mongooses, and lions.

The spring hare does not have regular sleeping or nesting chambers. Instead, it uses a different part of the burrow each day.

#### FOOD & FEEDING

Spring hares feed at night, which is when they are also most active. They forage in groups of two to six to be more alert to the approach of predators. In addition to grass,

they dig up and eat tubers and roots when other food is in short supply. Spring hares may also eat insects.

In cultivated areas, hares eat corn, peanuts, sweet po-

tatoes, and wheat. They also eat certain soils that are rich in minerals in a manner similar to other *herbivores* (plant eaters) that lick natural salt formations.

*Right: The spring hare's favorite food is green grass, which has a high protein and water content.*



#### BREEDING

Spring hares breed year-round. Each female produces a single young once or twice a year. The young is born with its eyes open and a complete coat of fur. It is very active at birth, but it remains in the burrow, completely dependent on its mother, until it is half

grown, at approximately one month.

At that time, the young begins to leave the burrow at night to forage with its mother. Although it is not fully grown at this stage, its feet and ears have almost reached their adult size.

*Right: The spring hare has keen senses of hearing, sight, and smell, which help it detect approaching enemies. Spring hares can run rapidly from predators, covering large distances by hopping on their long hind legs.*



#### DID YOU KNOW?

- A spring hare can completely close its ears so that it can keep out sand when it is burrowing.
- Bushmen eat most of the spring hare, including the eyes, brain, and stomach contents.

- The spring hare's greatest rivals for food are domesticated animals, especially goats.
- Spring hares are the only species in their family. They have never been found outside Africa.

#### HARE & MAN

Spring hares are hunted for food and for their fur. A single group of bushmen may catch as many as 200 spring hares every year. As the bushmen become less numerous and move into populated areas, fewer hares will be hunted. Today they are routinely hunted when their foraging on cultivated land threatens crops.

*Right: An African bushman digs a spring hare from its burrow.*





# AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

CARD 53

GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER  
*Carnivora*

FAMILY  
*Ursidae*

GENUS & SPECIES  
*Ursus americanus*



**The black bear is the smallest North American bear and is said to be the least aggressive. Not all black bears are black; some have rusty brown or gray and black coats.**

## KEY FACTS



### SIZES

Height to shoulder: 3 ft.  
Length: 4-6 ft.  
Weight: 100-300 lb. Male is much larger than female.



### BREEDING

Sexual maturity: Male, 5-6 years.  
Female, 4-5 years.  
Mating season: June to mid-July.  
Gestation: 220 days.  
No. of young: Up to 5; usually 2 or 3.



### LIFESTYLE

Habit: Generally solitary.  
Diet: All types of vegetation and plant material, fish, small mammals, and carrion.  
Call: Woof sound when startled.  
Lifespan: About 25 years.



### RELATED SPECIES

There are 7 species grouped in 5 genera, in habitats ranging from polar regions to tropical forests.



Range of the American black bear.

### DISTRIBUTION

Found in many states, especially Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, and in all Canadian provinces.

### CONSERVATION

Now a partially protected species. Although numbers have decreased from former days, they are again increasing in national parks. Still, hunting for sport remains widespread.

## FEATURES OF THE AMERICAN BLACK BEAR



**Foot:** Bears walk on the entire sole of their foot. When they walk, the stride is about a foot long; it increases to three feet when running.

**Climbing:** The bear climbs by wrapping its front legs tightly around the trunk and climbing up. To descend, the bear always comes down backwards, hind-quarters first.







### FOOD & HUNTING

Although the American black bear is classified as a carnivore, it only occasionally eats meat. It feeds primarily on vegetation, including twigs, buds, leaves, nuts, roots, fruit, corn, and plant shoots. In spring, when it is particularly hungry after having spent an inactive winter, it tears the bark from

*Left: The agile black bear climbs trees to raid the nests of both birds and bees.*

trees to eat the layer known as *cambium* located just beneath the surface. It also rips into rotting logs with its claws, looking for small insects and grubs.

Black bears often climb trees to raid birds' nests for eggs and to tear open beehives to eat honeycombs, bees, and larvae. They also eat small mammals like porcupines.

Black bears hunt fish in

streams and rivers. They fish by diving or wading in the water, where they catch the fish with their paws or teeth.

Bears often disturb the landscape in areas where they feed. While searching for food, they turn over logs and stones, rip open tree stumps, and tear branches off trees.

*Right: A beaver is no match for the powerful paws and sharp teeth of the black bear.*



### BREEDING

The American black bear mates in June and July. The female gives birth only every two to four years.

Although the egg is fertilized during mating, it is not implanted into the uterus until fall, which means that the embryo develops only during the last 15 weeks of the gestation period. Since the birth takes place in January or February, the cubs are mature enough to leave the den in the spring.

The female gives birth to two to three cubs weighing no more than 12 ounces. They are born naked and blind, and they spend the cold winter months in the den where they

are fed and kept warm by their mother. By May, their coats are grown and their eyes are open. They are not weaned until they are six to eight months old, and they

spend their second winter in their mother's den, becoming independent the following spring or early summer.

*Below: The cubs spend their first two winters in the den.*



### BLACK BEAR & MAN

The American black bear was hunted widely in the past, although it is now a partially protected species in Canada and the United States. It is especially popular with visitors to Yellowstone National Park, where it roams among their cars and trash cans, looking for food.

The black bear's reputation as the original teddy bear dates back to the beginning of this century. President Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt captured a black bear on a hunting trip. He kept it as a pet, and a toy manufacturer used it as a model for the first teddy bear.

*The American black bear is timid, yet it is frequently sighted. Once widely hunted for sport, the black bear is now protected in some areas of the United States and Canada. Although some hunting continues, it is more abundant than the larger grizzly bear.*

### HABITS

The American black bear lives primarily in woodland habitats and spends much of its active life looking for food. The female ranges over an area of 1 to 35 square miles, whereas the male may have a territory of up to 200 square miles. The female does not share her territory, but the territory of a

male may overlap with those of other males. Confrontations are rare, and black bears are thought to avoid open country, where they are more likely to encounter the stronger, more aggressive grizzly bears.

The American black bear is most active at night but also

forages during the day, particularly when it is feeding heavily in the fall to prepare for a winter of inactivity.

As cold weather approaches, the American black bear searches for a protected spot for its den. It may be under a fallen tree, in a hollow log, in a cave, or in a burrow that it

digs, sometimes under the snow. Although its body temperature drops, its respiration slows, and its metabolic rate is depressed, the bear is not a true hibernator; it remains semiconscious the entire winter. When it emerges from its den in May it is thin and extremely hungry.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- The American black bear has been known to knock mountain goats from rocky ledges to kill them.
- Zoologists can determine the age of a bear by cutting crosswise through its tooth and counting the rings, which are similar to the annual rings found in a tree.
- Black bears sometimes raid commercial beehives.
- Seven hundred American black bears were slaughtered in Canada in 1953 to provide bearskin hats for British soldiers in Queen Elizabeth II's coronation.



# EASTERN CHIPMUNK

CARD 55

GROUP 1: MAMMALS



ORDER  
Rodentia

FAMILY  
Sciuridae

GENUS & SPECIES  
*Tamias striatus*



**The eastern chipmunk is active by day. It is extremely inquisitive and can be easily tamed.**

## KEY FACTS



### SIZES

Length: Head and body, 5-7 in.  
Tail, 3-4 in.  
Weight: 2-5 oz.



### BREEDING

Sexual maturity: 4-6 months.  
Mating: February-April and June-August.  
Gestation: 31 days.  
No. of young: 1-9; usually 4-5.



### LIFESTYLE

Habit: Active by day, nests in burrows.  
Diet: Nuts, seeds, berries, invertebrates, and occasionally, nesting birds, mice, and snakes.  
Lifespan: 2-3 years in the wild; 5-8 years in captivity.



### RELATED SPECIES

There are 22 chipmunk species, including the Siberian chipmunk, *Eutamias sibiricus*.



Range of the eastern chipmunk.

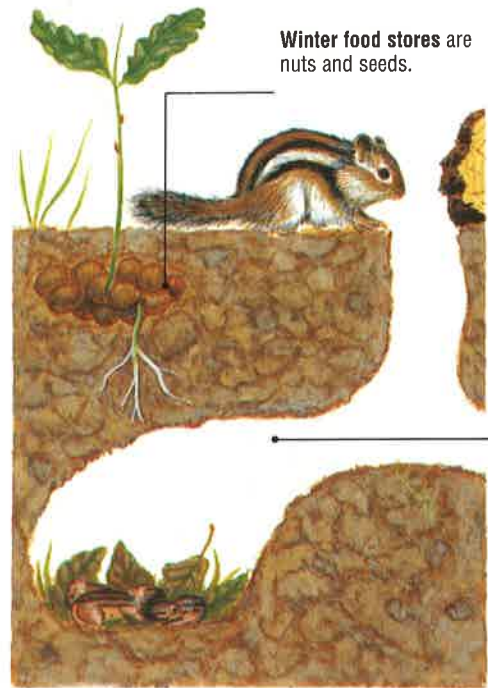
### DISTRIBUTION

Widespread throughout most of the eastern United States and southeastern Canada.

### CONSERVATION

Abundant; coexists peacefully with man, seldom doing so much damage to crops that its numbers must be controlled.

## FEATURES OF THE EASTERN CHIPMUNK



Winter food stores are nuts and seeds.

The **nest burrow** can have more than one exit, usually hidden under tree roots or other groundcover. It provides safety from such predators as snakes, foxes, bobcats, and birds of prey.

A chipmunk usually bites off any sharp edges from nuts or seeds before placing them in its elastic **cheek pouches**.



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*The eastern chipmunk spends much of the winter in its burrow, sleeping for up to eight days at a time. It is not a true hibernator, as it will awaken to dig into its hidden supply of nuts and seeds, stored during the summer and fall.*

### HABITS

The eastern chipmunk lives throughout the eastern parts of Canada and the United States. It is most commonly found in deciduous woodland and scrub, but it also inhabits coniferous forests and areas that have broken and stony ground. The chipmunk is not shy and frequently makes its home near human dwellings.

For most of the year, the chipmunk lives alone, establishing and defending a territory surrounding its nest burrow. The size of a chipmunk's

territory depends on the availability of food.

Even though it is a good climber, the chipmunk spends very little time above ground. It forages on the forest floor and makes its nest underground, beneath rocks, fallen logs, or even sheds.

The chipmunk continues digging its nest burrow for all of its life. As a result, burrow tunnels can extend for 30 feet or more, and may contain several chambers and exits. The chipmunk also digs shorter, simpler burrows for emergency exits and food storage.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- The eastern chipmunk has two fewer grinding teeth than other chipmunks.
- A chipmunk can carry nine large nuts at a time: four in each cheek pouch and one between its teeth.
- Cheek pouches can stretch to almost the same size as the chipmunk's head.
- The chipmunk stores only hard food that does not mold, such as nuts and cones.
- A chipmunk may store up to 8 pounds of food in its burrow at one time.



### BREEDING

Chipmunks usually have two breeding seasons: from February to April and from June to August.

During these periods, the female chipmunk will be ready to mate for three to 10 days, and gives a series of calls, known as *chips*.

Male chipmunks gather in a female's territory and compete for the chance to mate with her. Eastern chipmunks do not establish pair bonds, and after mating, the male leaves the female to bear and rear the

*Above: This alert chipmunk has found a vantage point from which to guard its territory.*

young on her own. After a 31-day pregnancy, the female bears a litter of four or five offspring in her nest burrow. She suckles the young for about a month before she takes them on foraging trips. At 6 to 8 weeks of age, the offspring are ready to leave the nest and establish their own territories.

Eastern chipmunks are fully grown after about three months; a chipmunk is not usually sexually mature until the following year.

### FOOD & FEEDING

The chipmunk is an omnivore. It prefers seeds, nuts, and acorns, as well as fruits and berries; but is also eats slugs, insects, spiders, nestling birds, eggs, and occasionally, mice or small snakes.

Chipmunks collect most of their food from the forest floor, but will harvest nuts and berries directly from tree limbs if necessary. Most of the food they collect is stored in their burrows for the winter, but some may end up in other safe places throughout their

territories.

In winter, chipmunks use their keen sense of smell to find these supplies. Some hoards remain undisturbed, however, allowing some of the buried seeds to germinate in the spring. In this way, chipmunks aid in the propagation of those trees and bushes that bear their food.

*Right: A gap between molars and incisors allows a chipmunk to pack its pouches at the same time that it gnaws its food.*

