

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

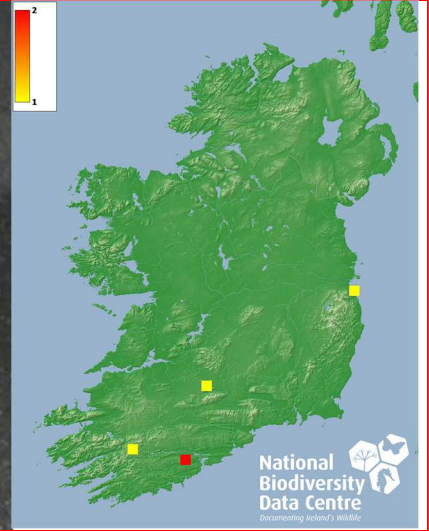
Raccoon



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Invasive species alert for: *Procyon lotor* (Linnaeus 1758)

Common name(s): Raccoon

Why the concern? The raccoon is listed as an invasive species in Ireland and one of 49 regulated invasive alien species in Europe (www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/invasive-species/union-concern-ias/). In April 2011, this species was seen in the wild in County Cork. This was the first record for Ireland. It is likely that this species has arrived in Ireland through the pet trade or trade in animals for zoos.

When raccoon populations reach high numbers, they can impact on native biodiversity. The species is known to predate on bird nests and amphibians resulting in reduced breeding success. Raccoons are also a carrier of the roundworm *Baylisascaris procyonis* which can be dangerous to other species of mammals and birds. There is concern that this species could transmit infectious diseases to humans.

What does it look like? Raccoons have a distinctive masked face, with a dark stripe running from the centre of its forehead down to nose. It has greyish fur. The head is wide with big eyes and pointed muzzle. One of the most distinguishing features of the raccoon is its black or almost black mask that fully surrounds the eye region, reaching from the cheeks across the eyes and muzzle. It also has a bushy ringed tail.

Where might I see it? Raccoons can be found in many different types of habitats including urban areas and woodlands. Members of the public may see this species near houses and in housing estates. It is an excellent climber so don't forget to look up when trying to spot one.

For more information or to report any sightings visit:

www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/invasive-species/

