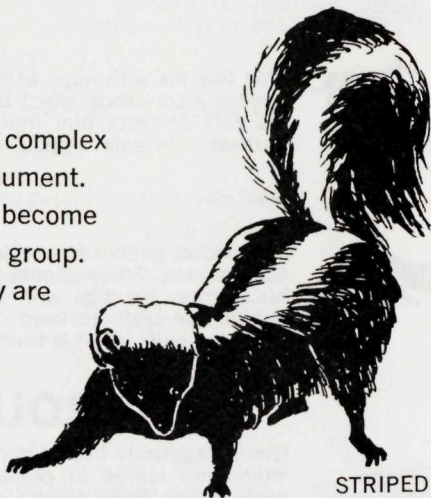


10¢

SPOTTED
SKUNK

MAMMALS *of* Joshua Tree National Monument

Mammals are merely one small piece of the complex web of life that is Joshua Tree National Monument. We have split them out here so that you can become familiar with the individual members of this group. But mammals alone could not survive. They are intricately woven among other strands of the web—plants, insects, birds. Should any strand be broken the whole system may collapse. So if you are fortunate and see a mammal, whether rabbit or rat, bat or bighorn sheep, tuck that memory in your mind and let the animal go on his way. The joy is in the discovery! And if you observe, and do not disturb, the web remains complete for someone else to discover.

STRIPED
SKUNK

by

William F. and Sandy Dengler 1972

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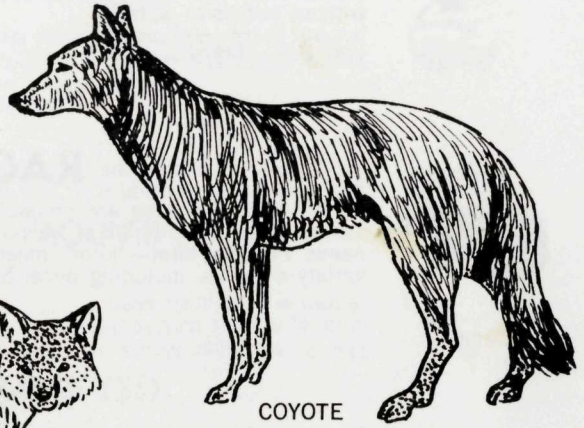
William F. and Sandy Dengler
Twentynine Palms, California

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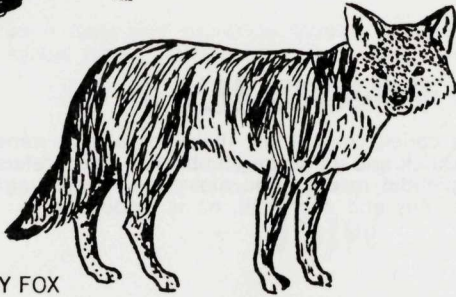
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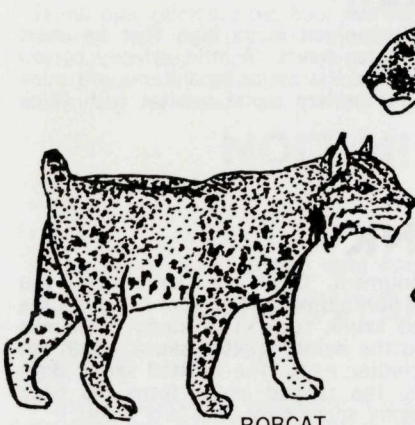
KIT FOX



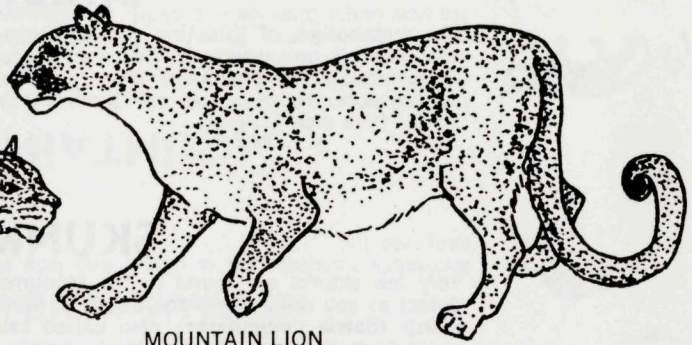
COYOTE



GREY FOX

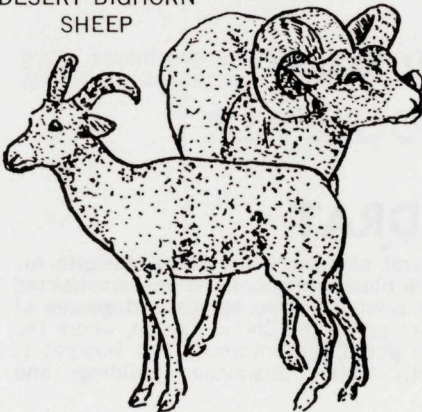


BOBCAT

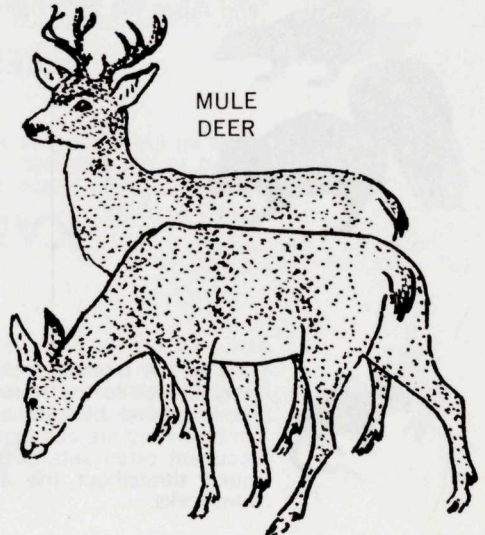


MOUNTAIN LION

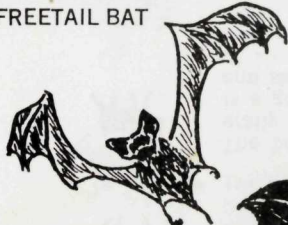
DESERT BIGHORN
SHEEP



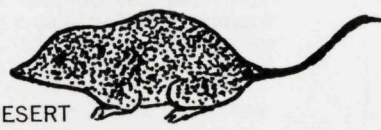
MULE
DEER



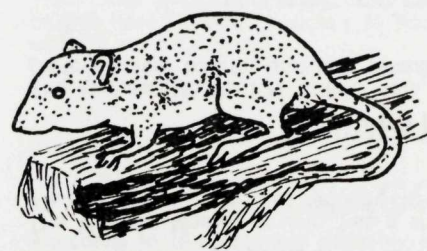
MEXICAN
FREetail BAT



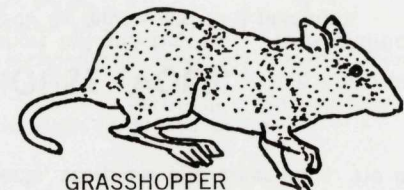
DESERT
SHREW



POCKET MOUSE



GRASSHOPPER
MOUSE



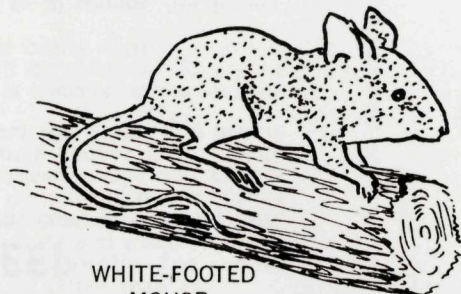
WESTERN
DIPISTRELLE



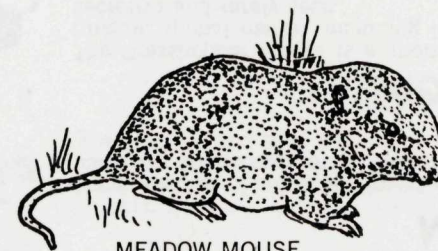
LEAF-NOSED BAT



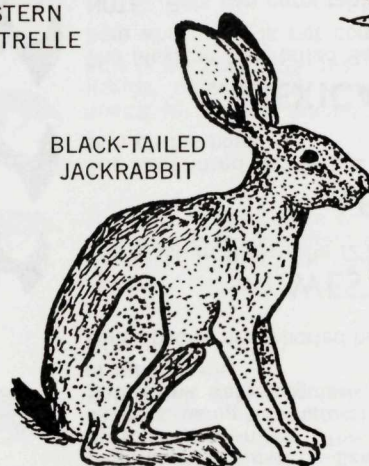
WHITE-FOOTED
MOUSE



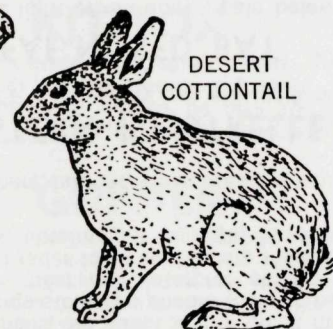
MEADOW MOUSE
OR VOLE



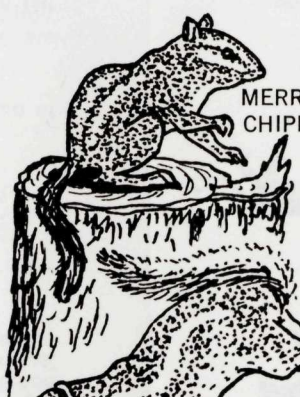
BLACK-TAILED
JACKRABBIT



DESERT
COTTONTAIL



MERRIAM'S
CHIPMUNK



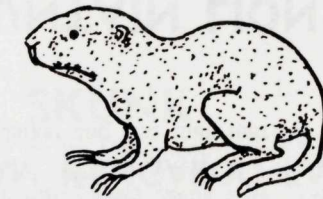
HARVEST MOUSE



ANTELOPE
GROUND SQUIRREL



POCKET GOPHER



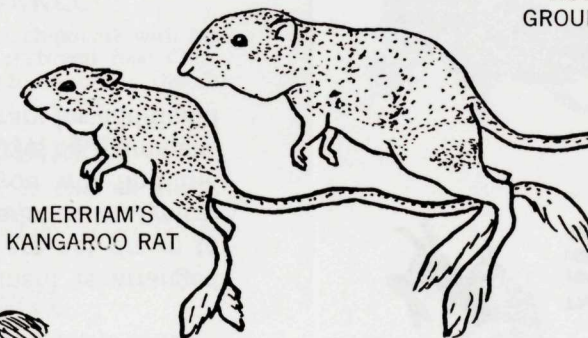
RACCOON



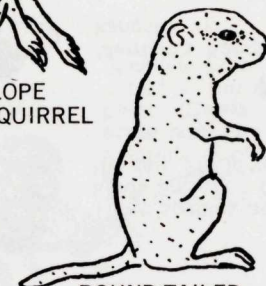
RING TAIL



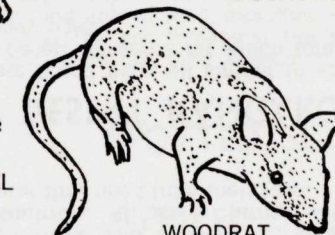
MERRIAM'S
KANGAROO RAT



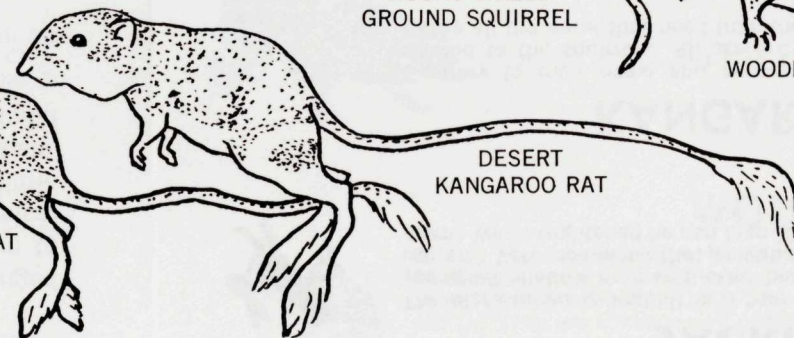
ROUND-TAILED
GROUND SQUIRREL



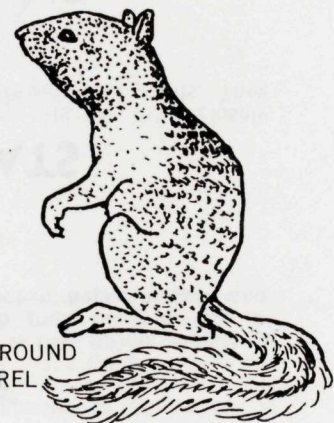
WOODRAT



DESERT
KANGAROO RAT



BEECHY GROUND
SQUIRREL



BADGER



INTRODUCTION

This list of the mammals of Joshua Tree National Monument is arranged alphabetically for your ease of reference. The silhouettes are not drawn to scale, one to another. Rather, they show outline characteristics or typical poses that are helpful in field identification. We hope you will find the accompanying notes of interest. There are many popular books on mammals. Upon returning home you may wish to explore your local library for additional information on those species of special interest to you.

BADGER



The badger is found throughout the Monument. Long claws serve him in digging and defense as he roams at night in search of small rodents, insects and lizards. Home for the 2 to 5 young is a den lined with leaves and grass at the end of a long, sloping tunnel.

BATS

Bats, the only flying mammals, are adept at the quick maneuvering needed to catch flying insects. Large stomachs enable them to eat half their weight in food each night. They hear and interpret echoes from high-pitched squeaks, using this natural radar to fly and locate insects in total darkness. Bats drink water regularly, obtaining it in flight by skimming the surface of quiet pools.

Nine species are reported here, but only three are common:

WESTERN PIPISTRELLE



The Western Pipistrelle (2+”) is usually tan with dark head and wings.

LEAF-NOSED BAT



The Leaf-nosed Bat (4”) is light brown above, pale below. Note the flap of skin on his nose.

MEXICAN FREE-TAILED BAT



The Mexican Free-tailed Bat (4”), chocolate brown, is the only common bat here whose tail is not completely encased in a membrane.

NOTE: Bats can carry rabies. It is best not to handle them.

BIGHORN SHEEP



Smallish (about 3 ft. high at the shoulder) and the color of his rocky hills, the desert bighorn sheep is difficult to see. Look for him silhouetted against the sky on ridges and mountain slopes. He browses shrubs and grasses and requires drinking water. He may suffer during serious drouth. Both sexes have horns that grow continuously throughout life. Horns of a mature ram may weigh 40 pounds.

BOBCAT



The two to four foot long bobcat can weigh up to 30 pounds. He is generally nocturnal, catching birds, snakes and small mammals. The bobcat is a good climber but he usually hunts on the ground. His cat-like action and short tail identify him.

CHIPMUNK



Merriam's chipmunk (5” long plus 4” tail) is found only at higher elevations among pinyon and juniper. He is active in the daytime and eats nuts, berries and seeds. (See Ground Squirrel, Antelope).

COTTONTAIL



The desert cottontail is a true rabbit, bearing blind, naked young. He usually forages from dusk until dawn, avoiding the heat of day to help him retain moisture from his food, grasses, leaves and bark. He is hunted by all the larger predators, but is said to fight fiercely when his nest is threatened by snakes. The compact, dainty cottontail presents a much different silhouette from that of the tall, gangly jackrabbit.

COYOTE



The coyote (2 ft. high) mates for life. He will eat nearly anything: carrion, berries, small mammals . . . even watermelon left by campers. (Rarely, he will attack disabled large animals.) The coyote is common throughout the Monument and can be seen any time of day.

DEER



The mule deer is uncommon here but is occasionally seen at higher elevations in pinyon-juniper scrub. He browses certain trees and shrubs, annuals and grasses. The buck grows and sheds his antlers annually. The number of tines indicates the quality and quantity of food rather than age.

GREY FOX



This is the only “dog” that habitually climbs trees. His diet is varied: birds, lizards, rodents and some vegetation. Eagles, coyotes and bobcats are among his natural enemies. He is a relatively slow runner.

KIT FOX



This tiny fox with huge ears prefers low, sandy desert. Thick fur on his feet creates a snowshoe effect to help him run on soft sand. A mat of fur inside his ears protects him from loose dirt as he digs and occupies elaborate burrows. He eats insects and small rodents, especially kangaroo rats.

GOPHER



The pocket gopher is rarely seen above ground, but he is common throughout the area. A conspicuous mound of fresh dirt 8 to 20 inches across marks his burrow. He digs with long claws and sharp front teeth; his lips close behind the teeth to keep dirt out of his mouth. He eats roots and plants which he pulls into his tunnel from below.

GROUND SQUIRRELS

Ground squirrels live in burrows and are active during the day, eating seeds, fruits and leaves in season. They may take insects when vegetation is scarce. The three kinds in this area are easily distinguished.

ANTELOPE GROUND SQUIRREL



The Antelope Ground Squirrel superficially resembles a chipmunk with his striped sides. But unlike the chipmunk his face is unstriped (see Chipmunk). Very active and nervous, he carries his tail over his back. This is the common little visitor around campgrounds and picnic areas.

ROUND-TAILED GROUND SQUIRREL



The Round-tailed Ground Squirrel prefers sandy ground at lower elevations. Uniform light tan, it may be mistakenly called a gopher or prairie dog. Much less active than its cousin, it often sit upright and motionless beside its burrow.

BEECHY GROUND SQUIRREL



The Beechy Ground Squirrel, or California Ground Squirrel, likes to scramble among boulders and rocks. About 1½ ft. long, he resembles a grey squirrel. Look for him in quartz monzonite areas.

JACKRABBIT



The black-tailed jackrabbit is a true hare, bearing active, furred, wide-eyed young. A shallow nest is tucked beneath a shrub, there being no den or warren. Very common, the jackrabbit is most active between dusk and dawn. When frightened he can leap 20 feet.

KANGAROO RATS

Contrary to their name and appearance, kangaroo rats are most closely related to the squirrels. All are nocturnal, eating seeds and plants. They derive all the water they need from their food.

DESERT KANGAROO RAT



Three species are found here, all similar in appearance. The two common kinds are: The desert Kangaroo rat which totals about 15 inches including the tail. He is very pale.

MERRIAM KANGAROO RAT



Merriam's Kangaroo rat is darker and less than half the size of the desert kangaroo rat.

MOUNTAIN LION



Cougar, mountain lion, panther, painter, puma—all are names for the tawny cat that stands nearly three feet high. Timid and mild-mannered, he is very rare and seldom seen. He will take bighorn sheep and mule deer, serving the balance of nature by removing old, crippled and sick animals. He may range 20 miles in a night. His size and long tail are good field marks.

MICE

Many species of mice are found here, and most look alike to the casual observer. All are nocturnal. The five major sorts are:

GRASSHOPPER MOUSE



The Grasshopper Mouse is a short-tailed, small-eared rodent whose diet is unique, animal matter, including insects, scorpions and other mice. He is secretive and rarely seen.

MEADOW MOUSE (VOLE)



The Meadow Mouse, or vole, has a short tail and tiny ears. He is prolific, his population explosions held in check by reptile and bird predators.

HARVEST MOUSE



The Harvest Mouse has a long tail, large ears and grey underparts. He prefers grassy habitat and may remodel a birds' nest for his home.

WHITE-FOOTED MOUSE



The White-Footed Mouse has a long tail, large ears and pure white underparts. Five species live in various areas of the Monument.

POCKET MOUSE



The Pocket Mouse is identified by his small ears and long tufted tail. His cheeks have fur-lined pouches to transport seeds and leaves. He can live without access to water.

(See Also Shrew)

RACCOON



Raccoons in this area are probably escaped pets originally imported from Texas. The 'coon's habit of washing his food is the basis for his scientific name, *Procyon lotor*—"lotor" means "washer." Active at night, he eats a variety of foods, including mice, birds, eggs, fruits and berries.

RINGTAIL



The ringtail may also be called ringtail cat (he's not a cat), miner's cat, cacomixl or cacomistle. Quick and agile, he climbs well and prefers rough, rocky terrain. He is a splendid mouser who also takes lizards and birds, insects, fruit and berries. Shy and nocturnal, he is seldom seen.

SHREW



The metabolism of this tiny, mouse-like animal is so high that he must consume his own weight in food every three hours. A mild salivary poison helps him subdue prey larger than himself. His major food items are mice and insects. He is active any time and prefers moist habitat with thick cover. (See also Mouse).

SKUNK

Very few skunks are found in the Monument. Often the skunk smell you detect as you walk across the desert in springtime comes from bruised Chia plants (*Salvia columbarae*), also called skunk sage. Two kinds of skunks occur here, the large striped skunk and the dainty spotted skunk. Both eat a variety of plant and animal food, including eggs. The spotted skunk does a "handstand" when danger threatens: the striped skunk turns his back and raises his tail. Both use their famous scent only as a last resort.

SPOTTED SKUNK

STRIPED SKUNK



WOODRAT



This is the famous packrat or trade rat of cowboy literature. Despite his resemblance to the Norway rat he is a clean animal. Dens are constructed above ground beneath a large loose pile of sticks, stones and pieces of cactus. They are common and conspicuous in the Cholla Garden, where the occupant often sets cactus spines to guard the entrance. The woodrat is found throughout the area, frequently around abandoned buildings and mineworks.