

Ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*)



Taxonomy:

Family Procyonidae. Also called cacomistle or ring-tailed cat. Fourteen subspecies are recognized. The regional subspecies is *Bassariscus astutus nevadensis*.

Description:

Differentiated from the raccoon by its long tail (about as long as the body) and lack of a black facial mask. Clearly distinguished from other regional species.

Total length: 616-811 mm; Tail: 310-438 mm; Hind foot: 57-78 mm; Ear: 44-50 mm; Weight: 0.8-1.1 kg.



Distribution:

From southern Oregon, eastern Nevada, northern Utah and Colorado south through the southern plains, southern Rocky mountains, and California into southern Mexico including the Baja peninsula. Although common elsewhere in the state, there are few records of ringtails from northern Utah.

Ecology and diet:

Ringtails prefer rocky areas such as canyon edges, rock outcrops, and talus, in piñon-juniper woodland and desert riparian habitat. They are excellent climbers and strictly nocturnal. They have omnivorous food habits, eating a variety of invertebrates and small vertebrates, as well as fruit and other plant matter.

Life History:

Ringtails mate in early spring, and litters of 1-4 young are born after a gestation of about 7 weeks. Young are weaned at about 3 months of age. Both sexes mature during their second year. Life span in captivity averages 12-14 years.

References: Hall 1981; Pogleyan-Neuwall & Toweill 1988; Zeveloff 1988.