

NORTH AMERICAN PORCUPINE

Kingdom: Animalia **Phylum:** Chordata **Class:** Mammalia **Order:** Rodentia **Family:**
Erethizontidae

Erethizon dorsatum

Description: The North American Porcupine is easily recognized by its many quills which can number up to 30,000.

Length: 2-3 feet plus a tail up to 1 foot.

Weight: 8-15 pounds

Habitat: Wooded areas

Distribution: North America

Diet: Tree bark, conifer needles, leaves, seeds, fruit

Life Span: 17 years

Status: Not listed

Special Characteristics:

- The quills become erect whenever the North American Porcupine is threatened.
- The Porcupine does not actually throw its quills, but they are easily disengaged if touched. The barb on the end of quill makes it difficult to remove.
- The hollow quills give the Porcupine extra buoyancy in the water enabling it to swim easily.
- Native Americans used their quills in their costumes and various artifacts, and used them for meat.
- They spend most of the time high in the trees eating bark.
- Porcupines have sharp claws and hard, bare foot pads for climbing. There are 4 claws with a vestigial thumb on the front and 5 on the back.
- There will be several different dens in hollow logs or rocky crevices within their territory.
- Nocturnal
- Poor vision but excellent senses of hearing and smell.

Reproduction:

- 1 Sexual maturity at 1.5-2.5 years
- 2 Gestation 7 months
- 3 Usually single birth.
- 4 Babies are born with long black hairs and the quills are short and soft.