

Mammals of the Shasta-Trinity

Shasta-Trinity National Forest



Proximity to wildlife adds immeasurably to your outdoor experience as you visit the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Many of the mammals that inhabit the area are secretive in their ways, moving about at night or concealed from your eyes by the forest cover. Even the most alert observer may

only see the signs that these animals leave in passing. Soft dirt, stream banks and lake shores are excellent places to find their tracks. Take some time on your visit to the Shasta-Trinity to sit or walk quietly, and see how many animals or animal signs you can discover.



Black Bear

Ursus americanus

These bears range in color from black to brown, from cinnamon to golden with a few “black” ones thrown in for good measure. They range throughout the Shasta-Trinity, and because they are omnivorous, will eat just about anything... berries, fish, grubs, grass, even your breakfast bacon and your deodorant! They also eat mice, ground squirrels, deer and some livestock. Grizzly bears once roamed the Shasta-Trinity area, but extensive hunting during the Gold Rush and the encroachment of civilization drove them to extinction. The last grizzly in California was killed in the 1920s, leaving only the Black Bear to roam the mountains. The presence of black bears can be a real problem in areas where human activity and bear populations overlap. For more information on Black Bears, pick up a copy of “Bear Precautions for Houseboating & Camping,” available at most Forest Service Offices.

Columbian Blacktail Deer

Odocoileus hemionus

This deer is really a scaled down version of the much larger Mule Deer. The Blacktail is the most abundant mule deer in California and occupies a wide variety of habitats from high alpine meadows to lowland riparian areas. They can be seen at all times of the day or night but tend to be most active at night and during early morning or late evening hours. The Blacktail has the ability to see motion very well, but not stationary objects. They rely heavily on their keen sense of smell and hearing as they observe their surroundings. When startled they bound off quickly with their tail raised high like a flag, often stopping some distance away and turning to look back at whatever it was that startled them.



Ringtail or Miner's Cat

Bassariscus astutus

This little critter isn't a cat at all, but more closely related to the raccoon. They are nocturnal animals, and are rarely ever seen during daylight hours. They feed on small mammals especially mice and wood rats, but they also eat insects and fruit when it is in season. The ringtail prefers rocky, brush covered slopes at lower elevations. When prospectors and miners moved into the California foothills during the Great California Gold Rush, they often adopted ringtails as pets and kept them around their cabins or tent sites... hence the popular name “miner's cats.”

Raccoon

Procyon lotor

The Raccoon is a nocturnal animal known for his black robber's mask and busy ringed tail. Raccoons make their dens in the holes of trees, in hollow logs and in the crevices of rocky ledges. They tend to frequent shallow streams and river banks where they forage for freshwater mussels, crawdads, frogs and fish. They are inquisitive animals, and with their nimble fingers can undo latches on coolers and boxes. They are not shy about sharing your food if you leave it out and unattended in your campsite.



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Striped Skunk

Mephitis mephitis

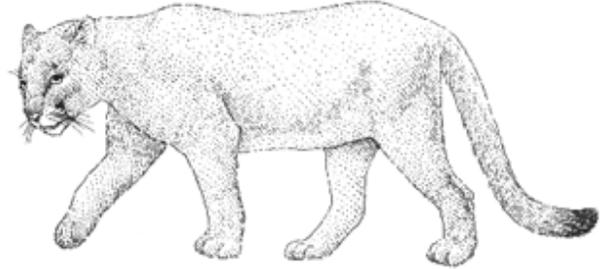
Striped and spotted skunks are masters of the art of chemical warfare! They are well known for their obnoxious odor which is sprayed from two glands at the base of the tail. Before spraying, skunks usually give a warning by raising their tails and stamping their feet. Occasionally they will raise themselves into a handstand, pointing that odious tail directly at the intruder as a sign of warning. Skunks are nocturnal animals, found throughout the foothill and lowland country of the

Shasta-Trinity. They feed on large insects and small rodents, but sometimes eat carrion, bird eggs and some plants.

Mountain Lion

Felis concolor

Because of their secretive ways, these large cats, also called cougars and pumas, are seldom seen. The largest member of the cat family in this area, they prey mainly on deer, but will also take porcupines, rabbits and rodents. They hunt by stalking or laying in ambush in rocky, brushy areas. They are active at all times of the day and night.



Bobcat

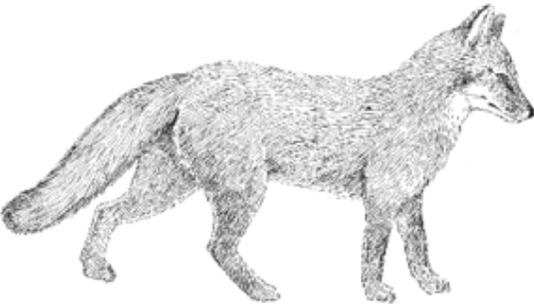
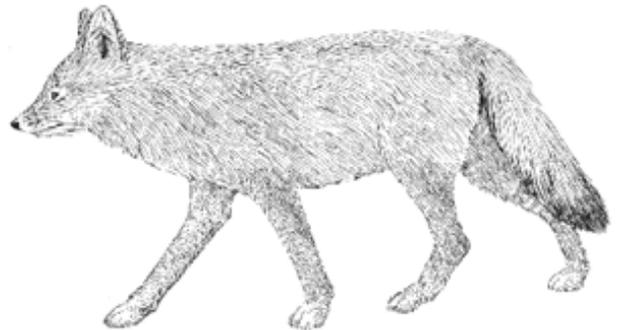
Lynx rufus

This small, raccoon sized cat is shy, but is occasionally seen by visitors to the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. They are especially active during the nighttime hours, but are also abroad during the day. They frequent all types of habitats as they hunt for rabbits, rats, mice, squirrels, birds, reptiles and some invertebrates.

Coyote

Canis latrans

Coyotes are frequently seen on the Shasta-Trinity and are usually not shy about making their presence known. Often heard at night, the coyote's song reminds one of scenes from the old western movies. When running, the coyote's unique habit of tucking its tail tucked between its legs easily distinguishes it from the fox which holds its tail straight out. Coyotes hunt and eat a wide variety of rodents, squirrels, marmots, woodrats, pikas, rabbits and insects. They will also eat birds and berries. Occasionally they will take deer. Coyotes are highly social animals, living and hunting in packs.



Gray Fox

Urocyon cinereoargenteus

This small member of the dog family is seen frequently as it darts across roads and open meadows in search of food. It has a long, bushy tail and inhabits the lower elevations of the Shasta-Trinity. It tends to be nocturnal although daytime sightings are not uncommon. The fox is an omnivore, meaning that it eats almost anything available, from small rodents and insects to carrion and berries. Unlike other members of the dog family, the Gray Fox can and does climb trees in search of food. Its cousin, the Red Fox, is infrequently seen at higher elevations, preferring mature pine and fir forests interspersed with meadows.

River Otter

Lutra canadensis

This playful and highly social animal frequents almost all river courses on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. It is an accomplished swimmer, and feeds mostly on fish, crawdads, freshwater mussels and frogs. The otter is active at all times of the day and night. Their dens are located in burrows dug by other animals, cavities among the roots of trees, hollow logs or in dense thickets of brush. Watching otters at play can be very entertaining. A good place to see them in their natural habitat is at the Sven-Olbertson Side Channel Wildlife Viewing Area just below Lewiston Dam.



Western Gray Squirrel

Sciurus griseus

The Gray squirrel is a tree dweller, nesting in cavities or building nests of branches twenty or more feet off the ground. They are most active during the daylight hours. As the sun rises, they can often be seen sunning themselves on high branches in pines and oaks. They are also called “bushytails” because their tails stream behind them as they run, or curl it up and over their backs as they sit and eat. In the wild they are shy and hide when intruders come into their territory. Where they are accustomed to human activity, they sometimes make pests of themselves by cleaning out bird feeders. Gray squirrels frequent black oak and gray pine forests on the Shasta-Trinity.



Douglas Squirrel or Chickaree

Tamiasciurus douglasi

This noisy little squirrel has a dark, reddish-olive back and a yellow or rusty colored belly. Its tail is not as bushy as the gray squirrel's. Chickarees cache their food, seeds, nuts, eggs and fungi, in large piles which they visit regularly. Hikers know they're in Chickaree country when they spot deep piles of white and red fir cone debris on logs and the ground. Seeds from white and red fir cones are this little critter's favorite food in the high country. Their nests of twigs, leaves and bark are built in the cavities of trees or on branches near the trunk.

Northern Flying Squirrel

Glaucomys sabrinus

This small squirrel is rarely seen because, unless disturbed, it comes out only at night. It's name is somewhat misleading because it actually doesn't “fly.” Rather, it glides from tree to tree, or tree to ground by leaping from its perch and extending its legs and the loose flaps of skin that connect them. These flaps form “wings” of a sort that allow the squirrel to glide easily through the forest for distances up to 150 feet. If it wants back into the tree tops, however, it must climb. The flying squirrel eats a variety of things like seeds, nuts, fruits, fungi, insects, baby birds and eggs. In the winter it munches on moss and lichens. Unlike the gray and Douglas squirrels, they do not store food. Owls prey on flying squirrels as they glide from tree to tree.



Chipmunks

Eutamias Spp.

These friendly, and sometimes pesky, little critters are common throughout the Shasta-Trinity, and are encountered almost everywhere. They are most often seen scampering around campsites where they pilfer food and beg for goodies. Their small size and the white and dark brown stripes running down their backs from nose to tail make identification easy. They are comical, resourceful, manipulative, and vociferous when things don't go their way... upset one and it will scold you until it tires of the game and runs off into another campsite. There are several varieties of chipmunks in the area... Yellow Pine, Allen's, Sonoma, and Least chipmunks.

Golden Mantled Ground Squirrel

Spermophilus lateralis

The Golden Mantled Ground Squirrel is not a chipmunk, though easily mistaken for one. They are much larger than their smaller cousins and lack the white and dark brown stripes along the head from nose to ear. Looks aside, they act much the same way, and have the same personality that make chipmunks so entertaining. Like the chipmunk, they love to make themselves at home in your camp, steal your food and run off with forks, spoons, and even dishes that have food stuck to them. Begging for handouts is hardly beneath their dignity, but if you don't cooperate and hand over the snacks they think they need, they simply steal it when you turn your back... run off into the rocks with cheeks stuffed full and then come back for more. They are widespread from the mid-elevation Ponderosa Pine forests to high alpine meadows.



Bushy Tailed Wood Rat

Neotoma cinerea

This little wood rat is common throughout the Shasta-Trinity and very active at night, foraging in upper elevation coniferous forests for fruit, nuts, berries, fungi, and the leaves and stems of shrubs and grasses. They will hardly win the award for architectural excellence as they haphazardly build their nests of forest litter, dung, bones and other objects. Nests are easily spotted in the woods... they can be several feet high and several feet in circumference. Visitors to the wilderness often find the evidence of wood rat nests inside old abandoned cabins and other structures.



Marten

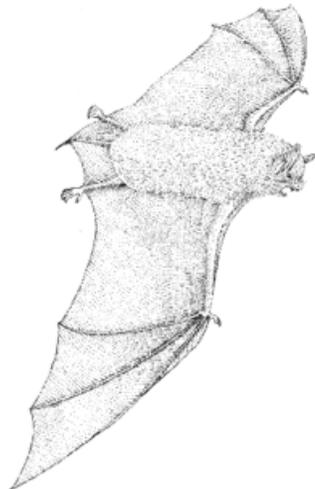
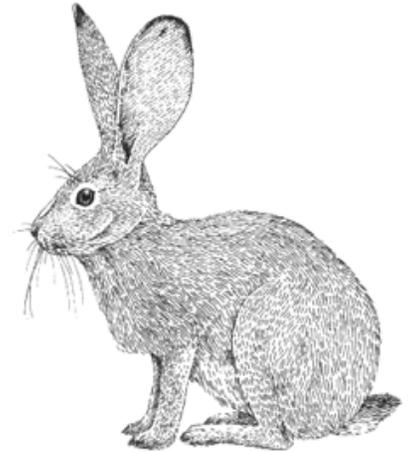
Martes americana

Martens live throughout the Shasta-Trinity, usually in the mid to high elevation conifer forests. They are a member of the weasel family, spending daytime and nighttime hours hunting squirrels, chipmunks, mice, rabbits, birds and fruit occasionally. They forage in trees, tree cavities and along rocky slopes, sometimes digging for their prey. They are the size of a house cat and are shy when humans are around, usually running off when they spot an intruder.

Black-tailed Jackrabbit

Lepus californicus

This rabbit is everywhere at the low to mid elevations. They prefer open grasslands or brushy areas, but can also be seen in timbered areas near meadows or other openings. They are a prolific species that nests in dense brush or in thick stands of grass. They hardly ever use burrows. They are active at all times, day or night and are an important food source for birds of prey, coyotes, martens, fishers and the occasional bear. We see them most often in our headlights at night along stretches of road and highway.



Bats

There are several species of bats that call the Shasta-Trinity home, or that migrate through at different times of the year. The Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*) is one of the more common ones. They are nocturnal mammals that favor the crevices of rocks, trees, or caves where they spend daylight hours resting. In the late evening they can be seen emerging from their roosting sites as they head for their favorite insect hunting grounds. The Little Brown Myotis is most closely associated with water and is frequently seen skimming high mountain lakes in the evening hours.

Wapiti or Elk

Cervus elaphus

Elk were hunted into virtual extinction in this neck of the woods by market hunters during the Great California Gold Rush in the late 1800s. In 1913, a small band of elk were reintroduced to an area in Shasta County and today a small herd thrives in the eastern part of the Forest. More recently, elk have been reintroduced to several other areas in Trinity and Siskiyou counties. People driving or hiking in the back woods occasionally spot one, but more often than not what they see are their tracks and beds.



There are lots of opportunities for wildlife viewing on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. In fact, several areas have been designated as official Wildlife Viewing Areas. These areas are indicated on the Forest Map with the universal binocular logo. For more information on these areas and how to get to them, contact any Forest Service Office.

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