

America's
HIDDEN
Animal Treasures

Ringtail

Miner's Cat



by Joyce Markovics

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Contents

A Surprise Guest.....	4
Where's Home?.....	6
Big Eyes, Bigger Appetite.....	8
Feeding at Night.....	10
Expert Hunters.....	12
Fast Attack!.....	14
Up Close with Ringtails.....	16
Starting a Family.....	18
Growing Up.....	20
How Many Ringtails?.....	22
Shrinking Habitat.....	24
The Future.....	26
 Ringtail Facts.....	 28
People Helping Ringtails.....	29
Glossary.....	30
Bibliography.....	31
Read More.....	31
Learn More Online.....	31
Index.....	32
About the Author.....	32

A Surprise Guest

It was just before lunchtime on May 23, 2011. The employees at an office building in Irvine, California, had just discovered a strange, furry visitor feasting on a bucket of fried chicken in their conference room. The animal was small and raccoon-like, with huge eyes and a long, puffy ringed tail. The employees had never seen anything like it. What could it be? They phoned the experts at Irvine **Animal Control**, who rushed to the building to help.



No one knows how the animal (shown here) got into the building. It might have entered the conference room after it smelled the fried chicken.

The animal control experts quickly identified the animal. It was a ringtail! They caught the young male with a net and guided him into a special carrying case. Later that day, they brought the ringtail to a nearby **preserve**. There, with **ecologist** Jutta Burger's help, they safely released him back into the wild. Jutta watched as the animal dashed out of the case and disappeared into a hole in a tree. "I must say it seemed to really like its new home," said Jutta.

The captured ringtail (shown here) was released into a wooded area known as the Irvine Ranch Natural Landmarks, where it quickly found a new home.



Although they are sometimes called ringtail cats, ringtails are not actually cats. In fact, they are closely related to raccoons and **coatis**.

Where's Home?

Although ringtails live throughout the Midwest, the western United States, and Mexico, they are rarely ever seen. One reason is that they are active at night, when people are asleep. Another reason is that they are mostly **solitary** animals that tend to avoid people. Lastly, the colors of their coats help them blend into their environment so well that they are difficult to spot. While these reasons make ringtails hard to study, they haven't stopped **biology** professor David Wyatt.

Ringtails in the Wild



The color of this ringtail's coat allows it to blend in easily with the colors of its desert home.



David has spent more than 20 years tracking and studying these curious little animals. According to David, ringtails make their homes in forests, deserts, canyons, and rocky **plateaus**. They often choose places near rivers so that they can easily get a drink of fresh water. Basically, David said, “ringtails thrive anywhere they can find food.”



Ringtails generally live on their own, far away from people.



A ringtail in its den

During the day, ringtails sleep in hollow trees and rock **crevices**. These sleeping places are called **dens**. Ringtails sometimes line them with dried grasses so that they are more comfortable.

Index

- Arizona 15, 23
- babies 19, 20–21
- biologist 6
- Burger, Jutta 5
- California 4, 15, 16, 23
- claws 12, 15
- coatis 5
- communication 21
- dens 7, 19
- ears 10
- eyes 10–11
- feet 14
- food 8–9, 10–11, 19, 20
- fur 19, 20
- habitat 7, 24–25, 27, 28–29
- hunting 10–11, 12–13, 15
- Irving Ranch Natural Landmarks 5
- jumping 12
- litter 19
- mating 18–19
- Mexico 6
- Midwest 6
- miner’s cats 15
- nocturnal 10, 12
- predators 10, 28
- prey 10, 15
- raccoons 5, 9
- radio collars 17, 22
- scent 10
- size 8, 19, 28
- Sutter Buttes 16, 26
- tail 9, 13, 20
- teeth 15
- territory 18
- Texas 25
- trappers 25
- United States 6
- vibrissae 11
- Wyatt, David 6–7, 15, 22, 26–27

About the Author

Joyce Markovics is a writer and editor in New York City. She lives with her husband, Adam, and a spirited rabbit named Pearl, who is nocturnal, just like ringtails!

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Just before lunchtime in May 2011, the employees at an office building in California discovered a furry visitor in their conference room. The animal was small and raccoon-like, with huge eyes and a long, puffy ringed tail. However, it wasn't a raccoon—it was a mysterious ringtail!

Look inside to learn more about these secretive animals, including how they hunt, raise their young, and survive in the wild. You'll also find out how biologist David Wyatt studies and tracks these beautiful little animals—which are truly among America's finest hidden animal treasures.

Collared Peccary
Cactus Eater

Ringtail
Miner's Cat

Cougar
A Cat with Many Names

Roseate Spoonbill
Pretty in Pink

Jaguarundi
Otter Cat

White-Nosed Coati
Raccoon's Cousin

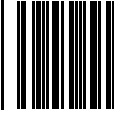
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