Fieldnotes: Raccoon

What to look for:

- Short, wide snout
- flared cheekbones
- large braincase.
- Teeth are flat and broad
    - built for crushing food rather than slicing.

Behavior/ecology: Omnivore

Eats fruits, insects, small animals, and even human food. Mostly active at night and very adaptable to cities.

Importance:

Helps control insect and rodent populations and plays a role in seed dispersal.

Fun fact:

Raccoons have highly sensitive front paws-they can 'feel' objects almost like we use our hands.

Raccoon

Procyon lotor

Fieldnotes: Virginia Opossum

What to look for:

- Long, narrow snout
- Small braincase
- Lots of teeth (more than most mammals!)
- Teeth are sharp and pointed
    - built for an omnivorous diet

Behavior/ecology:

Omnivore - eats insects, fruits, small animals, and carrion.

Mostly active at night and known for "playing dead" when threatened.

Importance:

Helps clean up carrion and control insect and tick populations.

Fun fact:

Opossums are the only marsupials in North America - they carry their young in a pouch.

Virginia Opossum

Didelphis virginiana

Fieldnotes: Red Fox

What to look for:

- Long, narrow snout
- Slim skull with small braincase
- Sharp, pointed teeth
    - built for slicing meat
- Teeth more delicate than a dog's

Behavior/ecology:

Carnivore/omnivore - eats small mammals, birds, insects, and fruit.

Active at dawn and dusk (crepuscular).

Importance:

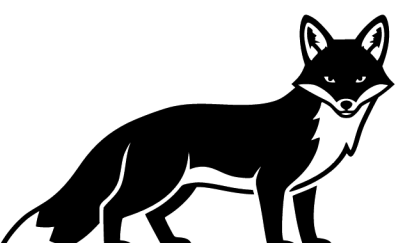
Helps control rodent populations and maintains ecosystem balance.

Fun fact:

Red foxes have excellent hearing - they can detect small animals moving underground.

Red Fox

Vulpes vulpes



Fieldnotes: Gray Squirrel

What to look for:

- Short snout with large eye sockets
- Strong, curved incisors in front
- Gap behind incisors (diastema)
    - no canine teeth present
- Flat molars for grinding plant material

Behavior/ecology:

Herbivore - eats nuts, seeds, fruits, and bark.

Active during the day and commonly found in urban and forested areas.

Importance:

Important seed dispersers - help forests regenerate by burying nuts.

Fun fact:

Gray squirrels forget some of the nuts they bury, which helps grow new trees.

Gray Squirrel

Sciurus carolinensis

Fieldnotes: Eastern Cottontail

What to look for:

- Large eye sockets
- Short, rounded skull
- Two pairs of upper incisors ("peg teeth" behind the front teeth)
- Flat molars for grinding plants

Behavior/ecology:

Herbivore - eats grasses, leaves, and bark.

Most active at dawn and dusk.

Importance:

Important prey species for many predators and helps shape plant communities.

Fun fact:

Cottontails can produce two types of droppings - one they re-eat to get extra nutrients.

Eastern Cottontail

Sylvilagus floridanus

Fieldnotes: Eastern Red Bat

What to look for:

- Very small, delicate skull
- Short snout
- Sharp, pointed teeth
    - built for catching insects
- Large braincase relative to size

Behavior/ecology:

Insectivore - eats moths and other flying insects.

Nocturnal and uses echolocation to hunt.

Importance:

Helps control insect populations, including agricultural pests.

Fun fact:

Eastern red bats often roost in trees and can look like dead leaves hanging from branches.

Eastern Red Bat

Lasiurus borealis