

Prehensile-Tailed Porcupine

Scientific Name: *Coendou prehensilis*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Erethizontidae



This is the smallest of the porcupines. The body is covered with short, thick, loosely attached quills, which are used as a defense mechanism, becoming easily imbedded in the flesh of animals that disturb them. The long, prehensile tail lacks spines. The lower surface of the terminal part of the tail is naked and modified for direct contact in coiling about branches. Each limb has four digits, each of which is armed with a long, curved claw.

Range

Their range is Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Bolivia and Trinidad.

Habitat

They inhabit forests.

Gestation

Approximately 203 days

Litter

1

Behavior

Prehensile-tailed porcupines are principally both arboreal and nocturnal. Slow in their movements, they are sure-footed climbers and use their tails in conjunction with their hands and feet. They prefer sleeping in tangled vegetation among the treetops but will also shelter in hollow limbs, tree trunks and shallow burrows. These porcupines are pugnacious, showing no fear upon capture; they bite and try to hit an adversary with their spines. They have also been observed to stamp their hind feet when excited and to roll into a ball if caught in the open.

Reproduction

Pregnant females and newborns have been reported for most months among wild porcupines which, when coupled with observations of captive colonies, indicate there probably is no breeding season. Females usually mate immediately upon giving birth. Infants are born with their eyes open and "ready to go." Quills are soft at birth and harden in about a week. Weaning occurs at 10 weeks and adult size is reached at 48 weeks. Females are sexually mature at 19 months. Offspring may be produced less than a year apart.

Wild Diet

Leaves, tender stems, fruits, blossoms and roots