

Ringtail

Bassariscus astutus

Located in the hot arid deserts and subalpine canyons along the West Coast of North America from Mexico to Northern California, these largely nocturnal, scansorial omnivores are a part of the Procyonidae family.



Habitat Specialists

Experimental studies have been performed to analyze the water balance system of *B. astutus*. These studies have concluded that when sufficient food is present in the range, then *B. astutus* does not require drinking water to effectively maintain water balance. This explains their innate ability to survive in very dry habitats.

B. astutus has a long tail; about the same length as their body. This allows them to balance and move quickly across small ledges and breaks in the rock.

Locomotion

- *B. astutus* has excelled in rocky vertical terrain, trees, and talus fields due to specific modifications, most notably their ability to reverse their hind limbs.
- This hind limb reversal allows *B. astutus* to descend vertical faces head-first while being able to latch onto the wall with their semi-retractable claws and glabrous foot pads.
- Hind limb reversal is an osteological modification of the shape, position, and orientation of the joint surfaces found in the hip; no myological modifications present that help with reversal.

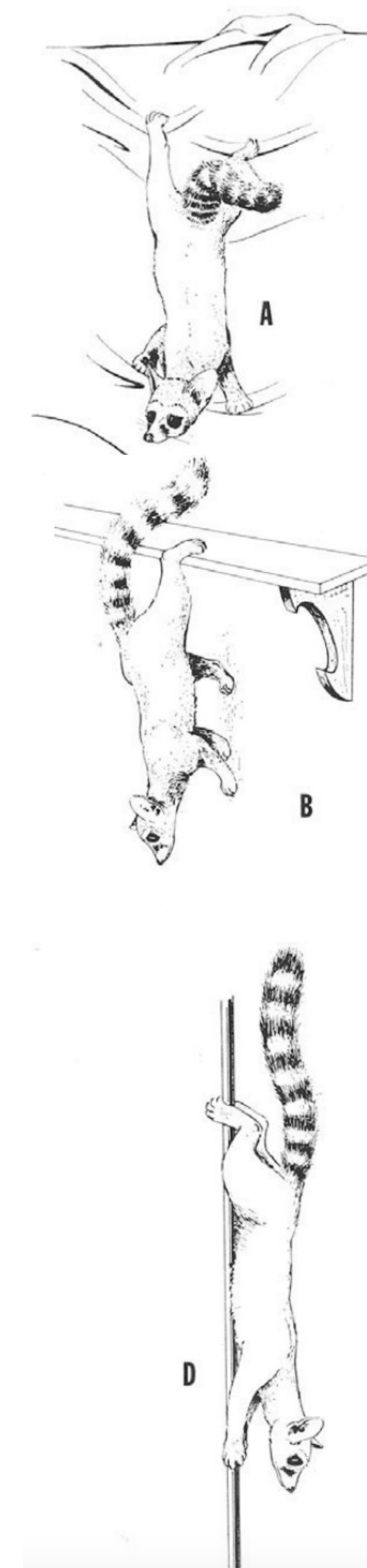
Diet

B. astutus is a very opportunistic omnivore whose diets are largely representative of locally occurring taxa.

- Fecal samples studied in the northern ends of their range such as Oregon and Colorado consisted largely of mammals, birds, fruits, and plants.
- Populations of *B. astutus* found in Baja California, Mexico revealed fecal samples largely made up of reptiles and invertebrates.
- Large percentages of mammals found in the fecal samples of northern populations consisted of Murid rodents, this can be hypothesized due to *B. astutus*' nocturnal personality.
- Birds were only found in samples mainly in the winter and spring and these seasonal occurrences may reflect habits such as arboreal feeding (i.e., hunting nests)

Sociality

- Seldom seen, this solitary mammal is quite rare despite its healthy populations.
- Telemetry has shown that social structure and hierarchy depends on land tenure and while there is evidence of some paternal care, it is quite brief, and offspring are usually reliant upon their mother for provisioning.
- Much like other members of Procyonidae, *B. astutus* has adapted to living around humans in their scavenging behaviors. *B. astutus* has even developed a reputation in areas like Yosemite National Park for stealing climbers' food high up on a wall.



Reproduction

- Monestrous, Placental mammal that gives birth in litters of ~4
- Usually gives birth late in the year in dens like rock crevices and tree hollows
- Gestation period of ~54 days
- Kittens are born quite altricial with no vision, no teeth, and bald.
- These kittens usually aren't weaned until at least 8 weeks where they start to independently den, they will not leave their mothers range until early-late winter depending on conditions.

Large Eyes adept at absorbing all available light during nocturnal habits

*actual size

