

Mammals in Idell Wedemeyer's Garden, El Sobrante in 2007

Seen daily or see results of their activities because they live in or explore through my garden:

Mammal	Behavior
Coastal deer <i>Odocoileus hemionus</i> either Black Tailed Deer or California Mule Deer	Bambie and co live in the gully and the hill across the road from my garden. They sleep at the bottom of my garden and busily chew up all kinds of supposedly "deer-resistant" plants. The fawns are cute, though. Fawns are born May and June and hidden for a month. Young does have one fawn, older does have twins. Deer love shrubs and even took chunks out of a prickly ear cactus. (See photo.) They ease up eating my stuff after the acorns drop in the fall. Enemies of deer are coyotes, dogs, cars, and mountain lions.
Raccoon <i>Procyon lotor</i>	Fight and scream and hiss, tear up branches on fruit trees, take large bites out of fruit, poop in the tadpole pond. SUCH good neighbors! They may live under the brush pile I made for birds. They are very active in the fall digging up parts of the garden (for earthworms); eat fruit, nuts, grain, insects, frogs, eggs and feed mostly along streams, lakes and ponds. Young may disperse in the fall up to 160 miles but usually less than 30 miles. Enemies include dogs and cars.
Striped Skunk <i>Mephitis mephitis</i>	They are ok around the garden. They will tear out and eat ground-dwelling yellow jackets which are very difficult to remove otherwise. This last year they ate three nests (one was over 12 inches in diameter). Skunks also eat other insects, grubs, mice, frogs and vegetable matter. Their main predator is the Great Horned Owl.
Opossum <i>Didelphis marsupialis</i>	They love to eat the grapes in the garden every night in the fall; also eat other fruit, vegetables, nuts, insects, and eggs. They may be nesting in brush pile at the bottom of the garden or under a deck.
Mice & voles	Various. Provide food for great horned owls and red tail hawks.
Pocket Gopher <i>Thomomys bottae</i>	Gophers took down a 12-foot fig tree one year. Gophers eat roots, tubers and greens. In IW's garden, vegetables, South African bulbs and California bulbs now grow in raised beds with wire underneath. Various plants with long tap roots live in gopher baskets, and figs, their favorite root candy, grow in wire containers. Gophers are active day and night, year round. They mature sexually in three months. However, they do aerate the soil and eat the taproots of some large weeds. Gophers are a food source for hawks, owls and coyotes the few times they appear above ground but gopher snakes can chase them anytime.
Mole Probably <i>Scapanus latimanus</i>	Not real common in my garden (I have no lawn). They do a good job aerating the soil in a few areas. Moles eat worms, insects, snails, slugs and some root crops. Moles are active day and night.
Western Gray Squirrel <i>Sciurus griseus</i>	Although I had seen them killed on the road about half mile away for years, there were none in my garden until about three years ago. They eat fruit, flowers, nuts, bulbs, roots, baby birds, insects and fungi. They nest in trees more than 15 feet off the ground. Population is kept down by hawks, owls, snakes and cars.

Saw frequently in the past but occasional or rare now:

Mammal	Behavior
Blacktail Jackrabbit <i>Lepus californicus</i>	These rabbits live on the hill across the road from my garden and seem to stay there since I rarely have rabbit damage (except from occasional domestic ones dumped out to “live off the land”). They eat green vegetation and shrubs. They are rarely seen now that the grassy hill is growing in to brush and a coyote pack moved in along with more people with dogs. Rabbits are also eaten by hawks, barn owls and large snakes.
Brush Rabbit <i>Sylvilagus bachmani</i>	They are rarely seen on the hillside across the road from my garden now that the coyote pack came in, along with some feral cats. Other enemies include owls, hawks and large snakes.
Coyote <i>Canis latrans</i>	A coyote pack had lived for three years in the gully at the bottom of the garden until 2004. (Maybe they finished eating all the local rabbits or someone poisoned or shot them.) Back briefly in 2007. They kept my cats awake nightly with their howling. Coyotes are omnivorous but eat mostly small rodents, rabbits, and squirrels plus domestic cats. Coyotes can be bothered by dogs and people.

Seen once or a few times in the last several years:

Mammal	Behavior
Gray Fox <i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	A gray fox made a den in the bank at the bottom of my garden and I would see it once in a while. They eat small rodents, insects, birds, eggs, fruit, acorns, rabbits and ground squirrels. Enemies include dogs, mountain lions, people and cars.
Woodrat Dusky-footed Woodrat <i>Neotoma fuscipes</i>	These rats lived in an interesting stick house built around a tree at the bottom of the garden. Oak leaves are a staple food but they also eat nuts, seeds, fungi, and fruit. Enemies include owls, foxes, bobcats and large snakes.
Bobcat <i>Felis rufus</i>	Saw one below the end of my garden twice several years ago. They eat rabbits, mice squirrels, woodrats, and small, weak deer.
Roof Rat or Norway Rat	Introduced species. I had one in the garage, but after I removed the food source, it left. These kinds of rats can cause enormous amounts of damage.

1. Scientific names and food eaten taken almost exclusively from Mammal Finder, a guide to mammals of the Pacific coast states, their tracks, skulls and other signs; by Russo and Olhausen (Russo was chief Naturalist at East Bay Regional Parks District), 1987 Nature Guide
2. <http://www.mammalsociety.org/statelists/cammammals.html>