

The raccoon (*Procyon lotor* L., 1758) – an invasive species in Germany?

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Abstract

The raccoon became an integral part of the German fauna and is designated as a „native species“ after the BNatSchG. If he is however an invasive animal remains unclear hitherto. In accordance with the Biodiversity Convention of Rio animals are stated as invasive, if they cause economic, health or ecological threats within their new habitat.

Economy: Raccoons could cause local crop losses while foraging, but the overall agricultural damage is negligible. In urban habitats they can sometimes cause costly damages to real estate.

Epidemiology: Raccoons rarely appear as carrier animals. The only known zoonosis is *Baylisascariosis* with four documented infections so far. Rabies, fox tapeworm or trichinas are irrelevant. However, the raccoon could function as a potential vector for Canine Distemper Virus.

Ecology: There is an ongoing discussion that raccoons could cause a negative effect on autochthone species, but proper scientific studies about that issue are lacking. Since raccoons are opportunistic foragers, this could mitigate their force of predation on single native species. Also a pressure of competition on native carnivores was not proven, yet.

Since an obliging definition about the size of damages caused by a neozoon is missing, a definite appraisal of the invasiveness remains difficult. Our present level of knowledge however leads to the conclusion that raccoons in Germany cannot be classified as an invasive species.

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