



Mammals of Scotts Bluff

Deer

If you happen to see a deer in the park, it would be one of two species, the mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) or the white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*).

For more information, ask a ranger for the Site Bulletin "Deer of the Prairie".



White-tailed Deer



Mule Deer

Coyote

The coyote (*Canis latrans*) is a common animal found in the park, but rarely seen. Their hair is a grizzled gray color and their bushy tail has a black tip. They usually weigh 20-40 pounds but can weigh more. The coyote is usually carnivorous, although it will eat just about anything from grasshoppers, mice, fruit, toads, snakes and rabbits. They will look for circling magpies and ravens to help them to food sources. Coyotes are more frequently heard than seen. They enjoy vocalizing at dusk, dawn or during the night. Man is the biggest predator of the coyote.



Cottontail Rabbit

The Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) is the most common rabbit in North America. It is chunky red-brown or gray-brown with large hind feet, long ears, large brown eyes, and a short fluffy white tail. Its underside fur is white. The cottontail's diet includes grasses, fruits and vegetables in the spring and summer, and twigs and bark in the winter. The cottontail is a very territorial animal. They do not dig burrows, but rest in a form, a shallow depression. Predators include hawks, eagles, owls, foxes, coyotes, bobcats and weasels.



Deer Mice

Deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) have large beady eyes, large ears and are often two-tone in color. They are accomplished jumpers and runners. The deer mouse is only three to four inches in length, not counting the tail. They vary in color from white to black, but all have white underside and feet. They are nocturnal and spend the day in trees or burrows. Deer mice feed on seeds, fruit, arthropods, leaves and fungi.



Red Fox

The Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is the largest of the true foxes. Red foxes adapt well to human environments such as farms, suburban areas, and even large communities. At birth the red fox is actually brown or grey. A new red coat usually grows in by the end of the first month. They feed on rodents, rabbits, birds, but will eat fruit, vegetables, fish, frogs and even worms. The fox's thick tail aids in balance, serves as a warm cover in cold weather and a signal flag to other foxes. Man is the main predator of the red fox, but others include bobcats and wolves.



Prairie Vole

The Prairie Vole (*Microtus ochrogaster*) has long, coarse grayish-brown fur on the upper portion of the body and yellowish fur on the lower portion. They have short ears and a short tail. Prairie voles are active year-round, and make shallow underground burrows and runways through surface vegetation. In winter, they tunnel underneath the snow. Prairie voles rarely live longer than two years. They feed on grasses, roots, seeds, bark and some insects. Predators include coyotes, hawks, foxes and snakes.



Prairie Dogs

Black-tailed prairie dogs (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) are small, short-tailed animals with small eyes and ears set far back on their heads, and have light-brown fur. Named for their bark-like warning call and black-tipped tail, prairie dogs average 12 to 16 inches in length and weigh one to three pounds. Prairie dogs live in colonies and are recognizable by the mounds at their burrow entrances. Prairie dogs feed primarily on plants, forbs and grasses. Predators of the prairie dogs include coyotes, bobcats, eagles, hawks, foxes, ferrets, badgers and humans. *For more information, ask a ranger for the Site Bulletin "Black-tailed Prairie Dogs".*



Fox Squirrel

The fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*) is the largest species of tree squirrel native to North America. The squirrel's total body length measures 18 to 28 inches and weighs one to two pounds. In most areas, they are brownish-grey to brownish-yellow. They have sharp claws to help with climbing. Fox squirrels have excellent vision and well-developed senses of hearing and smelling. They depend primarily on tree seeds for food, but also consume buds, fruits and nuts. Predators include humans, hawks, owls, snakes and bobcats.



Raccoon

The raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) is 16 to 28 inches long and weighs 8 to 20 pounds. The raccoon is usually nocturnal with a diet of insects, worms, fruits and nuts. Its grayish coat of dense underfur insulates it against cold weather. Two of its most distinctive features are its extremely dexterous front paws and its facial mask. The most important sense for the raccoon is its sense of touch. Predators include bobcats, coyotes and the great horned owl.



Porcupine

Porcupines (*Erethizon dorsatum*) are rodents with a coat of sharp spines, or quills, that defend them from predators. They are the third largest rodent and are 25 to 36 inches long and weigh 12 to 35 pounds. They come in various shades of brown, grey and rarely white. Porcupines eat leaves, twigs and green plants and in the winter they may eat bark. They are mostly nocturnal, but will forage for food during the day. Predators of the porcupine include: eagles, wolves and the great-horned owl.



Plains Pocket Gopher

The Plains Pocket Gopher (*Geomys bursarius*) is 5-9 inches long and weighs 4-13 pounds. It has short fur with brown to black coloration. Whitish hairs cover the tops of the feet. The pocket gopher has small eyes and ears and naked or sparsely-haired cheek pouches or "pockets" which give the animals their common name. Their short necks and short fur enables them to move about in their burrow. They lead an almost completely subterranean and solitary existence. The result of the gopher's tunneling are mounds of dirt. During the summer their burrows are only one inch below the surface, but are deeper in the winter. They can damage crops, but their tunnels also aerate the soil and helps prevent erosion. Predators include badgers, coyotes, domestic cats, hawks and owls.



Other Mammals

Other mammals found at Scotts Bluff National Monument include:

- Virginia opossum
- Eastern mole
- Small-footed myotis (bat)
- Big brown bat
- Desert cottontail rabbit
- Hispid pocket mouse
- Ord's kangaroo rat
- Western harvest mouse
- Bushy-tailed woodrat
- House mouse
- Meadow vole
- Muskrat
- Long-tailed weasel
- Mink
- Badger