

Racoons take the offensive. A current assessment

Erweitertes Abstract (gleichlautend in BfN-Skripten, Heft 32, Bonn, 2001)

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The North American racoon (*Procyon lotor*) had been introduced successfully into Germany in 1934 (Kampmann 1972). In forested areas of some German Federal States as in Hesse, Lower Saxony, Thuringia, North Rhine–Westphalia, but also east of Berlin, racoons became an established species and currently reach densities of more than 1 individual per 100 ha (Bialas 1998; Hohmann 1998; Hohmann & Bartussek (2001); Lux et al. 1999). But, according to a recently conducted study, which had been initiated and supervised by the GWN, we have to expect much higher densities in urban areas (Voigt 2000; Hohmann et al. in prep.): In parts of the city Bad Karlshafen

Table 1: Raccoon capture success in an urban island of Bad Karlshafen (26.4 ha), Germany, September–November 1999.

10 days trapping period	Total recaptures	Individuals per trapping period	Individuals pooled	Recapture rate	Pooled recapture rate
1	42	21	21	2	2
2	29	14	25	2,07	2,84
3	4	3	25	1,33	3
Summary	75		25	3	

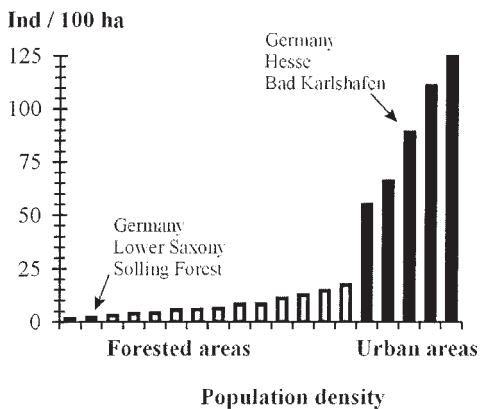


Fig. 1: Rough review of known population densities of racoons in two different habitat types: forested areas (white columns) and urban areas (black columns). Beside two measurements from Germany all other refer to studies conducted in Northern America.

(in Northern Hesse) we captured 25 individuals (Tab. 1), yielding a density of approx. 100 individuals per 100 ha (details see Hohmann et al. in prep.). Compared with American surveys this result can be considered as normal for urban habitats (summary in Riley et al. 1998, Fig. 1).

It is known that racoons have become numerous in other German cities, too (Hohmann et al. 2001a). What all these cities have in common is that they are located in valleys and are surrounded by forests. Racoons can transfer diseases to humans (e.g. roundworms, Kazacos & Boyce 1982; Gey 1998) and can cause some damage in houses, mostly in attics (Chamberlain et al. 1982), and thus urban public authorities express some concern. In Bad Karlshafen scats were collected and analysed from 15 individuals. Of those, 12 (80 %) proved to be positive for a human pathogen parasite *Baylisascaris*

procyonis. Beside this, human attitudes concerning urban racoons vary greatly. The GWN conducted several surveys and found for example in Bad Karlshafen that 89 % of those interviewed did not consider racoons a problem, although 33 % believed that racoons had opened their garbage bags and 52 % claimed that racoons had plundered their fruit trees. If asked how racoons should be treated, 9.2 % replied that racoons should be managed or reduced in numbers. 34.5 % of all interviewed people had no opinion, 24.4 % did not feel disturbed, 12.6 % accepted them and 19.3 % found racoons cute or nice (Voigt 2000).

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