

Animals of the Chihuahuan Desert

Javelina

Physical Characteristics

Though they look similar, javelinas are not pigs nor are they boars. Javelinas are medium sized animals with small ears, short legs, a short tail, and short coarse hair that is salt and pepper colored. Though they aren't a pig, they have a similar look including their pig-like nose. The collared peccary, the species of javelina found in the Chihuahuan Desert, has lighter colored hair around the base of its neck giving it the look of wearing a collar.



Diet

Javelinas eat a variety of desert plants such as agave, mesquite beans, and prickly pear. They will also eat lizards, dead birds, and rodents.

Habitat

Javelinas will make a home anywhere in the desert just so long as it is in the shade and out of the sun. This includes under trees and in small caves. They will also find shade in the shadow of houses which can sometimes cause damage to the home. They must stay in the shade when it is hot outside because unlike animals such as coyotes or mountain lions, javelinas don't have the ability to keep themselves from overheating.

Senses

Javelinas have a very unique scent gland at the top of their tail which helps mark their territory and identify themselves to other javelinas. They rub their backside on rocks, tree stumps, and the other members of their herd to identify themselves. They also have very poor eyesight. Though their very good hearing more than makes up for their bad eyesight, sometimes this affects how they escape from predators. It might look like a javelina is charging when really it is simply trying to escape or see you better.

Predators

Predators of the javelina include mountain lions, coyotes, and other big cats. Humans have also become a predator.

Interesting Facts

- Javelinas are very vocal animal. Their calls have three meanings. They make a barking sound when they are being aggressive, when they are being submissive, and when they are being alert.
- They live in groups, which helps them with survival as their herds can defend their territory.
- Baby javelinas are called "reds" because when they are young their hair is a red color.
- Javelinas will roll around in mud to try and cool off.
- Despite their short legs, javelinas can run up to 20 miles per hour!