

## **Sociality of seasonal den use in the raccoon, *Procyon lotor*.**

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Raccoons, *Procyon lotor*, are traditionally considered asocial, however they have been shown to exhibit flexibility in social structure. Group formation and communal denning have been anecdotally reported, often in relation to the utilization of clumped resources. We radiotracked 24 raccoons between the 1999-2000 winter and the present in Black Rock Forest, NY. All animals were communally denning throughout the 1999-2000 winter in a limited number of dens that were used repeatedly. The composition of communally denning groups was fluid, with individuals moving between dens independent of one another. In contrast, from spring through fall all raccoon dens involved solitary individuals that rarely used dens for multiple nights. We hypothesize that this seasonal social tolerance is a thermoregulatory strategy, which may explain why rabies spreads faster north.