

Outdoor Recreation *is* Outdoor Education

Learning About New Mexico's Wildlife Porcupine

Porcupine

She is obese, bowlegged and pigeon-toed. She is also myopic, antisocial and can scream like a wildcat. Your worst nightmare? No, a porcupine.

Porcupines occur throughout New Mexico. "Porky" is the second largest North American rodent; only the beaver is larger. Weighing in at 10 to 25 pounds, the porcupine has a small face, a thick body and a short, clublike tail. It is famous for its hairs, which have been modified into quills.

Folklore is so full of quill tales that one would think a porcupine could challenge an Olympic javelin thrower when it comes to flinging pointed spears. The porcupine, alas, does nothing so spectacular. Quills are never thrown; respect for them stems from their design. The sharp end of a quill is covered with shingle-lapped barbs. When a quill is embedded in tissue, the small barbs expand.



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
www.wildlife.state.nm.us
888-248-6866

