

Possible Raccoon Dog *Nyctereutes procyonoides* corpse found near Pershore, Worcestershire

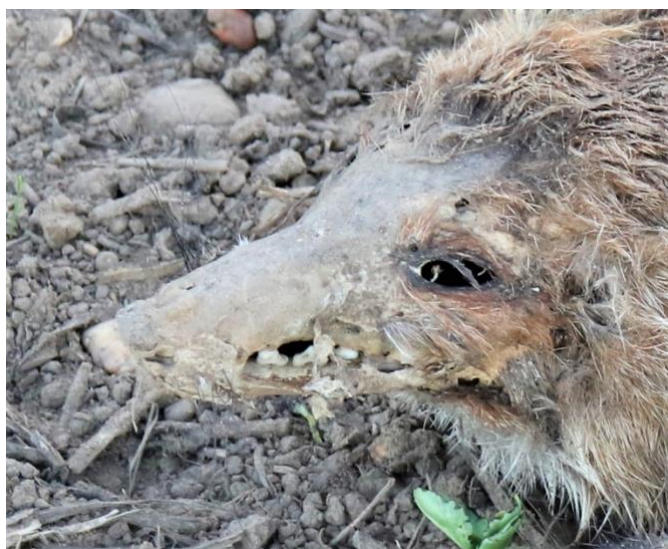
Gary Farmer

Raccoon Dogs *Nyctereutes procyonoides* (also known as 'tanuki') are members of the canid (dog) family and are native to the forests of eastern Siberia, northern China, North Vietnam, Korea and Japan. They are now widespread in some European countries, having been accidentally released or escaped. These little 'dogs' are omnivores and will eat insects, rodents, amphibians, birds, fish, molluscs and carrion, as well as fruits, nuts and berries. They are considered to be a risk to native fauna in Europe and are highly invasive (RSPB website).



01. Animal remains near Pershore. October 2021. Wendy Berry.

In October 2021 I received an email asking if I could identify the animal corpse in the attached photograph (01). It was found on Allesborough Hill just outside Pershore, Worcestershire and had obviously been dead for a while. One suggestion had been a Wild Boar but the image clearly shows the teeth (02) and feet (03) which I considered to be those of a canine. The animal looked stocky and the fur looked wrong to be a Fox so maybe a domestic dog?



02. Close up of head showing teeth. Wendy Berry.

I emailed the image to Brett Westwood who responded with "I used to dread dead animal/bones etc questions on Springwatch as mammals look so different when bits of them start to rot away! Assuming it's not a Fox(?) then it could be a domestic dog or just possibly a Raccoon Dog". I had not considered this species but looking at internet images, it certainly looked right.

Brett also forwarded the image to Professor Stephen Harris, who has studied Foxes for over 50 years. Professor Harris replied "Well, it is certainly a canid and I think Raccoon Dog – it has all the features. But what was it doing in Pershore? Did anyone retain the skull?"



03. Close up of feet showing claws. Wendy Berry.

Unfortunately I did not manage to locate the corpse so further investigation has not been possible, but it would certainly appear that at least one of these cute but unwelcome 'dogs' may have been at large in Worcestershire.

References

The Guardian website:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/09/raccoon-dogs-britain-non-native-pest-invasive-species> [Accessed 10.04.22]

RSPB website:

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/other/raccoondogs> [Accessed 10.04.22]

Images

01. Animal remains near Pershore. October 2021. Wendy Berry

02. Close up of head showing teeth. Wendy Berry.

03. Close up of feet showing claws. Wendy Berry.