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Arizona's littlest big game doesn't present much danger

The smallest of Arizona's big game seems to have so many big names attached — peccary, *Pecari tajacu*, *Dicotyles tajacu*, or across the border, jabali or *Chacoah peccari*.

The javalina is found in our foothills and desert valleys following the Verde River and Tonto Creek and occasionally even in the higher elevations. A small pig-like animal with a long snout, thick neck and compact body, short legs, small cloven hooves and short, straight tail, the javalina's weight run from 25-40 pounds. He survives on tubers, prickly pear, agave, acorns and mesquite beans.

His offspring usually come in pairs in the summer and the little ones are guarded against large predators, including the golden eagle, which has been known to snatch a piglet out from under its

guardian mother.

He travels in a herd of 40. Stories about his ferocity are undeserved, as he is a pretty docile little animal unless cornered with all escape routes cut off.

True, the javalina can look ferocious with his long canine teeth bared, but his impressive cutlery is more for digging out food than attacking.

The javalina's nose is a marvelously accurate instrument for scenting danger, as well as food; and along with good hearing, can make up for his very poor eyesight. The eyes are closed for ground work at low level.

By being downwind, and high on a rocky promontory, this writer was able to observe a mother and her teenager only 10 feet away, until her sensitive nose became aware of my presence, not to mention two dogs who were fortunately sitting beside me and had not spotted the family either.

The javalina is another desert animal well worth the time and patience to quietly observe undisturbed.