

Virginia Opossum

(*Didelphis virginiana*)



Identification:

Size: Average wt. = 4 - 9 lbs.

Coloration: Gray fur that has somewhat of a "shaggy" appearance.

Other distinguishing features: With its pointed snout and fur-less tail, this species may be mistaken for a large rodent.

Habitat:

Being quite adaptable, the opossum is at home just about anywhere. However it most prefers deciduous woodland habitat along stream corridors.

Benefits:

Opossums are nature's cleaning crew. They eat almost anything including vegetation, insects, spiders, reptiles, birds and rodents.

Problems / Concerns:

Opossums are often so capable of adapting to urban areas that their numbers increase within our city limits. They are often found feeding on trash or pet food left out overnight. This behavior is more of a slight annoyance rather than a real nuisance.

City Management Policy:

Eradication of this species is neither possible nor recommended. However, the city will not actively manage for the success of this species. The city will maintain secure trash containers to help eliminate artificial food sources. If deemed necessary, the city may trap and destroy a habitually offensive individual.

Note: Trapping and relocating animals does not work. It is not a viable solution.

Citizen's Responsibility:

Opossums are a natural part of our local ecosystems. However, since practices and conditions found in suburban neighborhoods are the primary reasons opossums flourish in urban areas, citizens are encouraged to do the following.

1. Secure all trash can lids.
2. Secure areas where birdseed and pet foods are stored.
3. Clean up spilled birdseed from around feeders and don't leave dog food, cat food, etc. out overnight.
4. Seal any openings in attics, chimneys, crawl spaces, etc. that could be used as a den. (Be sure there are no opossums trapped inside before you seal any openings.)
5. Above all, don't feed opossums!

Similar Species:

Small opossums may be confused with Norway rats. However, the fur of the Norway rat will appear smoother or less "shaggy" than that of the opossum.



Norway Rat