

# Virginia Opossum



GARDEN EARTH  
NATURALIST  
ECO-SERVICE CARDS

# VIRGINIA OPOSSUM

*Didelphis virginiana*

## IDENTIFICATION CLUES



- ◆ 15 - 20 inches long (size of a large house cat)
- ◆ coarse gray to brownish fur
- ◆ white face with long snout and rounded naked ears
- ◆ long naked tail capable of grasping onto tree branches



### Where To Look

Opossums are nocturnal. They are found in forests, swamps, farms and suburban areas.



### Tracks and Other Signs

Opossum tracks look like raccoon tracks except the “thumb” is set off from the other toes. This opposable thumb makes them excellent climbers.



### Winter Adaptations

Opossums do not hibernate, but they will build nests of leaves and grasses in hollow trees or abandoned burrows of other animals. They can retreat into these burrows during very cold weather.



### What It Eats

Opossums eat just about anything and everything, including fruits, berries, insects, crayfish, small rodents, eggs and even dead animal flesh. They also like to forage through human garbage.



### Predators and Other Dangers

They can be very vicious when threatened. They will also emit smelly odors and will even play dead to protect themselves. Their main predators are owls, hawks, foxes and coyotes. They are also one of the most common mammals killed by cars.



### Did You Know...

Opossums are marsupials which means they raise their young in a pouch just like kangaroos. When they are born they are the size of a honey bee. They crawl into the mother's pouch where they grow for two months.