

Virginia Opossum Fact Sheet



Class: *Mammalia*

Order: *Didelphimorphia*

Family: *Procyonidae*

Genus: *Didelphis*

Species: *Didelphis virginiana*

Average Length	15-20 inch or 38-51 cm	Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only native marsupial north of Mexico and originally found in parts of eastern US and southeastern Canada but was introduced to the western US
Average Height	6-10 inch or 15-25 cm	Habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inhabit wide range of landscapes and adapted to urban settings but prefer deciduous woodlands with streams Home ranges of individuals are up to 0.4 km² and typically overlap Sleep in dens and do not hibernate
Average Tail Length	9-20 inch or 23-51 cm	Reproduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breeding season is January-October A female opossum is called a jill, a male opossum is called a jack, and young are called joeys Begin reproducing at 6 month - 1 year old Females can produce 2 litters annually, have a 13 day gestation period, and give birth to 4-25 joeys that rely on pouch as a second womb for 60 days, though not all survive because females only have 13 teats Joeys cling to mother's back for 3-5 months
Average Weight	4-15 lb or 2-7 kg	Social Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A group of opossums is called a passel Typically solitary outside of mating season
Lifespan in the Wild	2-3 years	Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predators include large raptors and are occasionally preyed upon by bobcats, foxes, and coyotes Often injured and killed by cars
Lifespan in Captivity	4-7 years		
Top speed	4.6 mph or 7.4 kmph		
Behavioral Activity	Crepuscular and Nocturnal		
Physical Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hairless prehensile tail helps with climbing and all feet have opposable "thumbs" that help grasp branches Keen sense of smell and touch and have 50 razor sharp teeth, more than any other land mammal Typically only young opossums hang from their tails on trees and play dead Males are larger than females Body temperatures are typically too low to carry rabies 		
Diet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Omnivorous and opportunistic eater Feeds on worms, leaves, small mammals, young birds, acorns, snails, snakes, maggots, spiders, fruits, plants, nuts, berries, insects, rodents, frogs, eggs, crayfish, and garbage Lower the risk of spreading disease by eating carrion and thousands of ticks every week 		

Adapted from <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/virginia-opossum>, <https://seaworld.org/animals/facts/mammals/virginia-opossum/>, https://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Learning/documents/Profiles/Mammals/Opossum_Wildlife_Profile_UPDATE.pdf, <https://www.sugarlandtx.gov/398/Opossums#:~:text=The%20opossum%20is%20the%20only,let%20go%20for%20six%20weeks>, and <https://www.esf.edu/aec/adks/mammals/opossum.htm>