

OPOSSUM

Lifespan: : 1 to 2 years in the wild (up to 4 years in captivity)

Weight: 2 to 6 kg (males are significantly larger and heavier than females)

Body Measures: 35 to 55 cm in body length with a 25 to 55 cm tail

Body temperature: between 94°F and 97°F (34.4°C to 36.1°C)

TAXONOMY & ANATOMY

As the only marsupial native to North, center and south America, this mammal possesses a distinct pouch for carrying its young. It features a grizzled grayish-white fur coat, a long pointed snout, and a hairless, prehensile tail used for gripping branches. Its opposable thumbs on the hind feet provide an exceptional ability to climb.

HABITAT

This highly adaptable creature thrives in a wide range of environments, from deciduous forests and open woodlands to suburban neighborhoods. It prefers areas close to water sources, such as streams and swamps, where food is abundant. It easily takes shelter in hollow trees, rock crevices, or abandoned underground burrows.

DIET

The species is a nocturnal omnivore with a highly varied and flexible diet. It acts as an efficient nature cleaner by consuming large quantities of insects, ticks, snails, and carrion. It also feeds on small rodents, fallen fruits, berries, and nuts, occasionally foraging in human garbage bins when wild resources are scarce.



INTRODUCTION

The opossum stands as one of nature's most resilient and misunderstood survival experts. Armed with an ancient evolutionary history and a famous defensive strategy, this unique marsupial quietly patrols suburban yards and deep woodlands alike, offering invaluable pest control while showcasing an extraordinary adaptability to human-altered landscapes.





ETHOLOGY AND TEMPERAMENT

This solitary and nomadic animal wanders through changing home ranges without establishing permanent territory. It exhibits a peaceful, non-aggressive temperament, preferring to hiss or growl rather than fight when confronted by potential threats. When extreme danger strikes and escape is impossible, it initiates a famous catatonic state to mimic death. It stays active throughout the entire year, though it may hole up in a den for several days during exceptionally severe winter storms to conserve energy.

FUN FACT

When the animal plays dead, its body temperature drops, its heart rate slows down, and it secretes a foul-smelling fluid to fully convince predators it is rotting. Additionally, it has a remarkably low body temperature that makes it naturally immune to the rabies virus and mostly resistant to venomous snake bites.

BREEDING SEASON

Reproduction occurs twice a year, with mating cycles peaks typically falling between January and July. Following an incredibly short gestation period of only twelve to thirteen days, the tiny, honeybee-sized young crawl into the mother's pouch to attach to a teat. The offspring develop inside the protective pouch for about two months before moving onto the mother's back, where they ride along during nightly foraging trips until they reach full independence.

