

Only marsupial in North America needn't be pest

Opossums (*Didelphis virginiana*) are whitish or grayish mammals with underfur dense with sparse guard hairs, a long, pointed face with rounded, hairless ears and 50 teeth with prominent fangs. Their maximum length is 40 inches; the rat-like tail is about half the total length.

Opossum males average 6 to 7 pounds; females average 4 pounds.

Front and rear tracks resemble small hands with widely spread fingers.

Able to survive in diverse habitats, opossums prefer environments near streams or swamps.

They take shelter in burrows of other animals, tree cavities, brush piles, and other cover. They may den in attics and garages and make a messy nest.

Opossums prefer to eat insects or carrion and quantities of vegetable matter.

As scavengers, they visit compost piles, garbage cans or food dishes intended for dogs, cats and other pets.

Opossums are nocturnal loners with a home range of 10 to 50 acres. They don't hibernate and search for food on cold, winter nights.



Kimberly J. Moore

Opossums can destroy poultry, game birds and their nests.

The opossum is the only North American marsupial. The breeding season begins in February and runs through the summer.

The half-inch-long young are born 13 days after mating and find their way into the female's pouch, where an average litter of seven will remain for up to eight weeks.

They stay with their mother for about three months.

Although most young die during the first year, the survivors breed within the year. Maximum age in the wild is about seven years.

Although opossums have a top running speed of only 7 mph, they're well equipped to escape their few natural predators.

They readily enter burrows

JANUARY GARDEN CALENDAR

Home

- Keep holiday poinsettias and other plants near a bright window. Water as the top of the soil becomes dry.

- Increase humidity around houseplants by grouping plants together, placing them on a pebble-water tray or running a humidifier.

- Check stored produce and tender flower bulbs and roots for rot, shriveling or excess moisture. Remove and discard damaged material.

- Repot houseplants as they out-grow current pots.

Yard: Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits

- Check young trees for rodent injury on lower trunks. Prevent injury with hardware cloth or protective collars.

- Keep road and sidewalk salt away from plants. Construct a screen of burlap, if necessary, to keep salt spray off plants.

- Leaf through nursery catalogs and make plans for landscape and

home orchard additions. Order plants early for best selection.

- Early spring-flowering trees and shrubs, such as forsythia, crabapple, flowering quince, flowering dogwood and honeysuckle, can be forced for early indoor blooms by placing cut branches in water in a warm location.

Garden: Flowers, vegetables and small fruits

- Send for seed catalogs for the garden.

- Sketch your garden plans on paper, including what to grow, spacing, arrangement and number of plants needed.

- Order seeds and plants as early as possible for best selection.

- Wood ashes from the fireplace can be spread in the garden, but don't overdo it. Wood ash increases soil pH, and excess application can make some nutrients unavailable for plant uptake.

- Have soil tested to be certain of the pH before adding wood ash.

and climb trees.

When threatened, an opossum may bare its teeth, growl, hiss, bite, screech and exude a smelly, greenish fluid from its anal glands.

If these defenses aren't successful, an opossum may play dead.

When captured or surprised during daylight, opossums appear stupid and inhibited;

however they're surprisingly intelligent, ranking above dogs in some learning and discrimination tests.

The opossum's reproductive capabilities overcome any losses from both natural predators and hunters or trappers. Their slow travel pattern across highways is a more frequent cause of death.

Laws protecting opossums vary. Usually there are open seasons for hunting or trapping opossums.

Contact local wildlife authorities before removing nuisance animals.

Bar opossums from entering structures by closing openings to poultry cages and pens.

Prevent them from climbing over wire mesh fences with a tightly stretched electric fence wire near the top of the fence three inches from the mesh. Fasten garbage can lids with a rubber strap.

Opossums aren't wary of traps, leading to easy capture with suitable-sized box or cage traps or No. 1-1/2 leghold traps.

Set traps along fences or trails ways or at the entrance of a dirt hole or cubby.

Effective baits are cheese, slightly spoiled meat/fish or

fruit. Fruit reduces the chance of catching pets or skunks.

Medium-sized body-gripping traps will catch and quickly kill opossums. To reduce pet capture, set the trap above ground on a running pole.

A gun loaded with No. 6 shot or larger will kill opossums, though that is not recommended in urban areas.

Use a light to look for opossums after dark. The animal will often pause in the light long enough for an easy shot.

Wear heavy gloves and be wary of bites as opossums may carry rabies.

Euthanize unwanted animals humanely with carbon dioxide gas or release them several miles from the point of capture.

Property owner permission is required before releasing any captured animal.

Contact the Indiana Department of Natural Resources within 72 hours of release.

For more information, visit www.entm.purdue.edu/wildlife/wild.htm.

Kimberly J. Moore is extension educator for agriculture and natural resources at the Johnson County Purdue Extension Office.

Home sweet custom home

The centerpiece house at the Indianapolis Home Show is the largest ever built for the show.

Centex Homes, developers of the Harvest Grove subdivision north of Whiteland Road on State Road 135, constructed the 4,000-square-foot structure.

Vincent Laplante, marketing manager for Centex, says the builder is answering the demand for bigger homes with more architectural detail.

The centerpiece home features a spiral staircase, a round den and abundant open space. The design is a new floor plan offered by the builder.



SUBMITTED PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

• Scheming

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1)

Sunday, Knabe will discuss the importance of incorporating individuality into decorating.

"I'm very big on bringing family photographs into a room," he says. "It's getting a sense of history into the room. I find that terribly important."

When Knabe designed an office for Michael Jordan in Chicago, the former Chicago Bulls standout wanted to incorporate his high school's colors of purple and yellow/orange into the room.

"It was very personal to him," Knabe says. "He mentioned how pivotal high school was to him in terms of the career he had."

For Madonna, he designed wallpaper and fabrics to go with the art collection in her New York home.

Knabe, who has worked in Indianapolis for 12 years, is sensitive to both changing and stationary design trends.

Lately, styles have been staying

popular for longer than the normal cycle, he says. The inclination toward bright colors and earth tones will stick around, he predicts.

Knabe says more people are incorporating a global sense of design.

"It might be traditionally European patterns, but it might consist of a Chinese statue as well," he says of a hypothetical room's decor.

When Knabe designs an area, he likes an eclectic mix of elements.

"I think it gives someone sitting in the room a sense of peace," he says. "You fell more grounded."

To bring elements together, he uses color. A room with many different types of items can still have unity as long as there is one element, like color, to bring cohesion.

Knabe relies on the dramatic to create truly spectacular rooms.

Utilizing unexpected scale is a valuable decorating touch, he says. One object in a room that at first seems inappropriate in size can work well, he says.

"I love the idea of having huge paintings on the wall," he says.

GET BUSY

Sweetheart dinner, movie offered in Franklin

Franklin College hosts the third annual sweethearts event at 6 p.m. Feb. 10 in the Branigan Room of the Napolitan Student Center.

The evening will begin with a dinner buffet. Guests are invited after dinner to the Artcraft Theatre to view the movie "Breakfast at Tiffany's," starring Audrey Hepburn and George Peppard.

The movie will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Cost for the evening is \$30 per couple.

Reservations are required by Feb. 3 by calling 738-8050.

Smoking to be forbidden on Indianapolis campus

The University of Indianapolis campus will be entirely smoke-free following commencement in May.

The school, home to more than 4,100 students, is already an alcohol-free campus, and smoking is not permitted inside buildings.

In the fall, the Student Government Association proposed that smoking be forbidden on campus. The measure was later endorsed by the Faculty Senate.

University president Beverley Pitts supported the requests to protect the health of the school community.

Smoking cessation programs

will be offered in the spring to assist smokers who want to quit.

Southside church marks 75 years of ministry

Calvary Lutheran Church, 6111 Shelby St., Indianapolis, will begin a yearlong celebration of its 75th anniversary with a service at 10:45 a.m. Sunday.

A luncheon at Primo Banquet Hall, 2615 National Ave., will follow the service at 12:30 p.m.

The southside church has grown from a storefront to serving more than 1,000 members. It supports a school, as well as numerous other ministries.

Lunch tickets are available by calling 783-2000.

• Directive

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1)

Methodists' Iliff School of Theology in Denver.

He protested that whether Mohler realizes it or not, his "full-quiver" theology is white-supremacy code language advocating for the increase of white babies. Presumably, his fury stemmed from the fact that Mohler's Southern Baptist Convention is predominantly white.

Mohler said the Bible points to barrenness as a great curse

and depicts children as divine gifts.

The Mohler-De La Torre feud reflected two competing approaches toward the Bible.

Thinkers like Mohler want to apply biblical principles and precedents as fully as possible in the 21st century.

But De La Torre believes imposing modern concepts upon ancient texts is the height of biblical naivete. He contends that in the Old Testament, children were a blessing primarily in economic terms because in ancient agricultural societies, extra hands to work the field were valuable, and offspring provided financial security in old age.

Mohler's crusade was occasioned by things like a Salon.com article, "To Breed or Not to Breed." He objected that animals breed but human beings procreate and raise children to the glory of God.

Other provocations for his stance were debates about child-free apartment buildings and tax policies, an Atlanta newspaper's coverage of couples who prefer to spend money on gadgets rather than on children and the formation of No Kidding! a childlessness organization.

Mohler called one No Kidding! member who said she transfers motherly feelings to her dog "sick."

Make your loved one smile with a
Love Locket or Love Line

VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL

LOVE LINES
Send your mate or special friend a Love Line with 4 lines of type. Tell them how you feel, a note of friendship or even a marriage proposal!

LOVE LOCKETS
Submit a photo and up to 7 lines of copy. Tell them you love them! Children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, nieces/nephews, friends or loved ones.



*♥ We Love You Mommie ♥
Be our Valentine
Zach & Liz*



*♥ To My Special Valentines ♥
Riley & Aaron
All my love, Mommie*

Love Lockets: \$15 each, or 2 for \$29 (7 lines of type each & photo)
Love Lines: \$10 each (4 lines of type)

Please Print your message:

1 _____	Name _____
2 _____	Address: _____
3 _____	Phone: _____
4 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I am a Daily Journal subscriber
5 _____	Payment Amount: _____
6 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Check enclosed
7 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Credit card. MC / Visa / Discover (circle one)
	# _____
	Exp. date: _____

DAILY JOURNAL

Valentine Promotion

2575 N. Morton (U.S. 31), Franklin, IN 46131
317-736-2700

GENE RAY HEATING & COOLING

Family Owned & Operated

- Deal With Owner
- You Won't Believe Our Prices!
- We'll Meet or Beat Any Competitor's Offer
- Ask About 5 & 10 Year Warranties
- We Service All Major Brands
- Financing Available

787-5625

Call Gene Ray Right Away!

\$100.00 OFF

High Efficiency Furnace

Must present this coupon at the time of service. Can't be combined with other offers or coupons.

\$100.00 OFF

High Efficiency Air Conditioning System

Must present this coupon at the time of service. Can't be combined with other offers or coupons.

\$50.00 OFF

Air Cleaner

Must present this coupon at the time of service. Can't be combined with other offers or coupons.

\$5.00 OFF

Any Service Call

Must present this coupon at the time of service. Can't be combined with other offers or coupons.

GENE RAY, doing WHATEVER IT TAKES since 1976.

Bryant Heating • Cooling Products made in Indianapolis