

Opossum

No matter where you live in Florida, the opossum is there. Despite its rat-like appearance, it is not a rodent. This not aggressive marsupial has survived since the time of the dinosaurs and can adjust to living just about anywhere. As long as it can find the necessities of life; water, food, and a den it will be happy.

Many people who see an opossum that is drooling mistakenly think it has rabies. This is not the case. Statistics indicate that there has not been a case of rabies in opossums in Florida since rabies statistics have been kept.

The opossum is very beneficial as a rodent and carrion eater. Besides eating all types of dead animals, it eats a variety of food including fruits, mice, rats, snakes, lizards, eggs, insects as cockroaches, cricket, beetles, snails, slugs, etc. It also cleans up uneaten food which would normally attract rats.

Opossums are rarely seen together, and except for breeding season or a female with her babies, it is a solitary animal. It fights only if attacked, surprised, or cornered, but prefers to run or “play opossum”, which is said is an involuntary reaction to danger. An opossum will hiss or growl and show its sharp teeth when frightened.

It is not necessary to relocate an opossum that you see in your property. The opossum is not dangerous to you or your pets, if left alone. While any warm blooded mammal can carry rabies, it is unlikely that an opossum will. The best thing for the opossum is to be left in its own territory where it can find food and knows where there is a safe shelter. In many cases, the opossum will move to a more preferred habitat away from people if left alone.

Urbanization and land development have taken the majority of wildlife natural romping grounds away from them. We each must learn to live with wildlife around us. This means that we need to take responsibility for wildlife-proofing our homes, buildings and businesses.

