



pasadena humane society & spca  
compassion and care for all animals

# Help with Opossum, Raccoons, & Skunks

## Opossum

The opossum (Virginia opossum) is North America's oldest most primitive mammal. They are the only marsupials in North America. Being nocturnal animals, they are generally seen at night foraging for food. They are omnivorous and consume many types of plants, fruits and vegetables, carrion, insects, slugs, snails and earthworms.

Opossums are not typically aggressive animals. Although they have more teeth than any other mammal (50) they would rather "play possum," than fight their predators. By playing possum they slip into what appears to be a comma. This state can last anywhere from a minute to two hours. The natural predator of the opossum is the owl, fox, human and domestic dog.

### Benefits of Opossums

- Control snail population
- Immune to rattlesnake venom: help control rattlesnake population

## Raccoons

The raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) is the most well-know furbearer in California. They are easily distinguishable by their black-masked face and ringed tail. Their human-like forepaws give them great dexterity and aid them in climbing and swimming. Being nocturnal animals they have keen eyesight and hearing.

Raccoons are omnivorous and usually feed on fruits, vegetables, insects and grubs, small mammals, fish and bird eggs. They are intelligent, fascinating and highly adaptable animals. Their natural predators are coyotes, mountain lions, and humans.

### Benefits of Raccoons

- Help control rodent and insect populations

## Skunks

Skunks are primarily solitary animals. Just like humans, they have five toes on their front and hind feet. They have elongated nails that aid them in digging for insects and grubs. Skunks are omnivorous and will eat a variety of insects, wild fruits, and small vertebras like mice and eggs of ground nesting birds. Their only natural predator is the great-horned owl.

### Benefits of skunks

- Excellent at rodent and insect control, including black widow spiders and scorpions
- Will eat carrion, keeping roadsides clean

## Deterrent Ideas

### In yard or house

- Never intentionally feed wildlife
- Secure garbage cans with bungee cords, rope or chains
- Remove all pet foods, water and fallen fruit
- Close all pet doors and garage doors at night
- Keep all pets indoors

### Destroying landscape

- Animals are attracted to new landscape because of the grubs and pest that are present
  - Ask your local nursery about pesticides that can be used for grub control
  - Pin new sod to the ground with thin spikes or cover with a thin nylon bird netting
  - Water your lawns in early morning rather than in the evening
- Sprinkle your lawn or planters with cayenne pepper to discourage animals from grub hunting. For large areas cayenne pepper can be diluted with water and sprayed over lawn.
- Protect trees by securing sheet metal around the base of trees to a height of at least 3 feet
- Install low voltage hot wire fencing around planters

### In attic, chimneys, under decks or on rooftops

- In the fall, trim trees and shrubbery away from rooftops and fencing
- Cap chimneys with a commercial chimney cap or wire mesh

- Use towels soaked in household ammonia and place them in crawl space before nightfall. This should drive animal(s) out. The entrance point can then be sealed.
- Use radios or motion detected lights in "den" areas. Once the animal has left, seal all entrance points.

To ensure animal has left place flour outside entrance and look for animal prints. Be cautious during spring and summer, as there may be a litter of young that cannot escape.

### **Ponds and pools**

- Install an 8-inch wire mesh horizontally around the perimeter or provide a nylon netting cover at night
- Always provide fish with adequate hiding areas. This can be achieved with bricks, rocks and/or plants
- If you find an animal trapped in your pool leave a ramp or towel over the side of the pool so the animal has access to get out

### **Humane trapping**

- Temporary solution. Without ridding property of attractions other animals are sure to move in
- In spring and summer trapping can leave orphaned starving babies behind