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Wildlife Spotlight: The Awesome Opossum

Opossums are incredible animals that get a bad rap. This may be due to their rat-like appearance or tendency to root through trash and make their homes in our crawl spaces. To many, these animals are considered undesirable or even vermin. However, upon closer examination, we find they are of great ecological importance.

The opossum is North America's only marsupial, meaning they carry their young in a pouch. That hairless opossum tail? It turns out to be great for climbing and clinging to branches. They also have thumbs on all of their feet, giving them incredible dexterity in the branches. They are nothing to fear, being docile creatures which choose to play dead rather than bite or fight when they are stressed.

Opossums are also fastidious groomers. Rather than being dirty animals, they tend to be a lot more like a housecat, spending a good portion of their day cleaning themselves. And this is one of their biggest benefits to us!

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▲ Photo: Opossum - the last stop for many lyme disease-carrying ticks

The Awesome Opossum, contd.

A recent study concluded that these grooming habits cause a single opossum to consume or destroy as many as 5,000 ticks in a single season! Upwards of 90% of ticks that try to feed on opossums will end up being groomed away. Opossums also turn out to be very resistant to lyme disease, which ticks often transmit through their bite. These hardy marsupials have a temperature of 94-97 degrees F, lower than the other mammals we're used to. Because of this they make a very poor carrier for rabies, which cannot survive at a lower body temperature.

Their broad predatory nature has also afforded them an immunity to almost every kind of snake venom. Some researchers are using this trait to study new forms of anti-venom for snakebite victims.

If you see one of these animals hunting around your yard hunting for slugs, snails, or other pests, try to look past their unusual exterior. They provide enormous benefit to us and the ecosystems in which they live.

Calendar Updates

June 2 - Urban Wilderness Trail Certification Tree Planting

June 8-10 - NWF Annual Meeting

June 10 - National Get Outdoors Day

June 10-11 - Hoosier Outdoor Experience

June 15 - Holt Scholarship Application Deadline

June 19-25 - Pollinator Week

July 20 - Member Appreciation at Metazoa Brewery

August 5 - Taste of the Wild Cookout

Volunteer Opportunities

- June 2 - Urban Wilderness Trail Certification and Tree Planting 9:30a-11p**
 Come celebrate the first certification of the IWF Sustainable Trails Program! We will be formally announcing the Urban Wilderness Trail along White River and Fall Creek as a certified sustainable trail and **we need volunteers to help us plant over 100 native trees** along the trail. We will meet on the White River Trail behind the National Institute for Fitness and Sport (NIFS) building.
- June 10 - Hoosier Outdoor Experience at Fort Harrison State Park 9:30a-3p**
 Join us on Saturday at this year's Hoosier Outdoor Experience and help visitors build bird feeders. Volunteers are needed to organize materials and supervise kids as they put the feeders together. We'll have 2 volunteer shifts to choose from: 9:30am-12:30pm and 12:00-3pm. Just let us know which you prefer when you RSVP.
- August 5 - Taste of the Wild Cookout at the Indiana State Fair**
 Help IWF serve up venison sloppy joes, lemonade, and water at the 2017 Taste of the Wild Cookout at the Indiana State Fair in August. Stay tuned for additional details!

To volunteer, call us at 317.875.9453 or email us at info@indianawildlife.org.

Reminder that IWF Memberships expire on June 1st!

IWF's outreach, education, and advocacy would not be possible without the support of our dedicated members. By renewing your membership, you'll help promote common sense conservation in Indiana for years to come and strengthen our unified voice on critical wildlife and habitat issues.

It's easy to renew today, simply visit www.indianawildlife.org and click the RENEW button!



A Window into an Underwater World

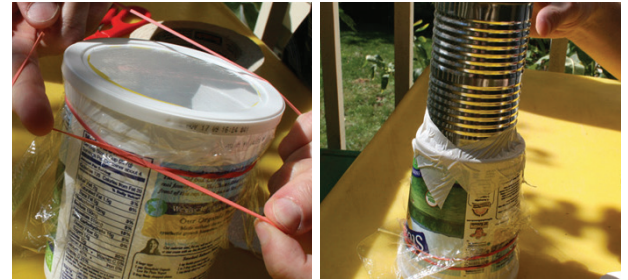
What you will need:

- Large plastic yogurt container
- Recycled steel can, 15-16 ounce size
- Can opener
- Duct tape
- Plastic wrap
- Rubber band (optional)
- Scissors

First, cut a circular hole out of the yogurt container bottom and lid using your scissors. This creates the frame of the window. Next, we install the window glass. Wrap your plastic wrap over the top of the open yogurt container and seal it by placing the lid over the plastic wrap. This creates the best seal, but rubber bands and duct tape may help too.

Next, open both sides of the aluminum can using your can opener. Attach the can to the bottom of the yogurt container to create a longer scope using your duct tape.

Now you can stick your periscope into the water (yogurt lid down) and get a view of what is below! Be careful, you do not want the water to go above the top of the yogurt container if you can avoid it.



Reprinted with permission from the National Wildlife Federation. For more family fun & kids games, check out www.nwf.org/Kids!

➡ Plant THIS, Not THAT ⬅



Burning bush
(*Euonymus alatus*)

This Asian shrub is such an ecological threat that its sale and distribution has been banned in several states. It is valued by some landscapers for its dramatic colors, tolerance of a variety of conditions, and lack of predators. However, it rapidly seeds and invades if not maintained. Even when managed, birds will consume the berries and seed the plant elsewhere.

Ninebark
(*Physocarpus opulifolius*)

Ninebark, named for its attractive exfoliating bark, is a hardy shrub that provides visual interest all year long. From the white or pink flowers in the spring, to the dramatic fall leaf colors, to the multi-colored winter bark, there is never a dull season for this Indiana native. Growing to a height of 9 or 10 feet, these shrubs can be used to provide hedge rows or erosion control in addition to their benefits to wildlife.





Thank you, Steve Cecil!

Long time IWF Board President, Steve Cecil, recently tendered his resignation. Steve has decided to lessen his commitments as he settles into retirement. He plans to reside in Florida and spend time in Indiana and Utah with family. Steve will fill the position of Immediate Past President and remain a member of the IWF Executive Committee. With a little less than a year left in the term, the IWF Board of Directors unanimously voted to fill the interim President position with Stacy Cachules. Stacy joined the Board in early 2015 and has brought a tremendous amount of knowledge in nonprofit management and leadership to the Board. IWF would like to give a heartfelt THANK YOU to Steve for his many years of committed leadership, steady guidance, and dedication to wildlife and habitat.

There's Still Time to Apply for the 2017 Holt Scholarship!

The June 15th deadline for applications is quickly approaching. Please remind any students that you know who are at or above a sophomore level and studying a field related to resource conservation or environmental education to submit their applications!

Visit www.indianawildlife.org/Holt-Scholarship to apply.

Spring Outreach Events

This spring, IWF attended numerous events, with more to come! We built 130 bird feeders with families at Earth Day Indiana, handed out 170 butterfly weed plants at Z'Greenfest, and gave away 50 packets of native seed mix during Boone County Gardenfest. A big thanks to all the volunteers who make these efforts possible!



▲ Photo: IWF bird feeder building tent at Earth Day Indiana



▲ Photo: Volunteers helped kids assemble their own bird feeders at Earth Day

Kids' Contest



Our Kids' Contest was a big success this year. We had over 170 participants. Prizes included an outdoor explorer kit, field guides, and a magnifying loupe.

Congratulations to our 2017 Kids' Contest Winners!

1st - 2nd Grade 5th - 6th Grade

Claire T.
Jamelia O.
Valeria D.

Charlotte C.
Ariana A.
Jacob W.

3rd - 4th Grade 7th - 8th Grade

Westen S.
Anna L.
Fayte B.

Jean-Luc E.
Sofia M.
Megan S.

Thank You to Our Donors!

Our bird feeder events are made possible by generous donations of supplies. All pre-drilled lumber was donated to us by North Dearborn Conservation Club. All hardware was donated to us by Lowe's of Central Indianapolis, Store #0635 at Glendale Town Center.

Annual Meeting

The IWF Annual Business Meeting was held on March 18th. The Board and Staff reported on 2016 accomplishments, membership, and financials, board elections were held, and a new resolution that addresses our concern about commercialization of catfish was adopted.

To read the full resolution, visit our website or [click here](#).



YOU'RE INVITED!



Please mark your calendars and make plans to join us for an IWF Member Appreciation Event on the evening of **July 20th at Metazoa Brewery** in downtown Indianapolis. This will be a great opportunity to meet the new IWF Executive Director, meet other conservation minded members, and hear a few highlights from the year, all while enjoying some delicious, locally brewed beers.

Annual Report

The 2016 IWF Annual Report has been published! We hope you'll enjoy exploring our program advocacy and education accomplishments. To view the full report, [click here](#).

Summer Intern Spotlight



Sydney DeLong

Sydney DeLong is the Communications intern for IWF and a senior at Indiana University with majors in Journalism and Political Science, and a minor in Gender Studies. Through her studies, she has become increasingly passionate about the environment and the conservation of natural resources for the betterment of future generations. Sydney looks forward to working with IWF towards the promotion of sustainability and conservation, particularly in regard to reaching young Hoosiers.



Evan Fall

Evan Fall is the Habitat Programs Intern for IWF this summer. As a junior at Indiana University, he is currently studying Environmental Management with a certificate in Business Foundations. Having been an avid hiker and wildlife enthusiast for many years he aims to further conserve Indiana's natural habitats through our Sustainable Trails Certification program. This fall, Evan hopes to continue his volunteer work with wildlife rehabilitation in the Bloomington, Indiana community and as the Co-President of Indiana University's Animal Club where they help introduce students of various backgrounds to the behind-the-scenes care of Indiana animals at a variety of nonprofit organizations.

Legislative and Advocacy Updates

A few highlights from the bills and issues that we worked on for the 2017 legislative session:

- The budget bill ([HB1001](#)) passed, but didn't include any major increases for conservation funding. We will continue to advocate for increased conservation funding, in particular in the IDNR budget and in the Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust.
- The general DNR bill ([HB1415](#)) was approved. We were disappointed that no upper limit was set on the cartridge length for high powered rifles.
- We expect to see legislation introduced again next year surrounding the ownership of the banks of the Ohio River ([HB1202](#)). We hope to work with Representative Arnold on the language of the bill to address our concerns that this would limit public access and set a precedent for other inland water bodies.

Additional advocacy highlights:

IWF has been engaging with many partners to advocate for conservation and sound management of our natural resources at both the state and federal levels. We have supported the adoption of the Indiana Environmental Literacy Guidelines, opposed the President's proposed cuts to conservation and natural resource funding, called for continued funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, opposed weakening regulations for the Clean Water Act, called for continued funding for conservation programs under the Farm Bill, and encouraged the Interior Department to avoid a funding delay for state fish and wildlife agencies under the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program.

Ray McCormick, IWF Board Member and NWF Representative, and Stacy Cachules, IWF Board President, will be attending the NWF Annual Meeting June 8-10. IWF has proposed a resolution that promotes soil health management practices as a national policy. Ray and Stacy will participate in caucus meetings, engage with conservation leaders from across the nation, and partake in the full resolutions process, where we hope to see our resolution adopted!

Thank you for your support and involvement during the 2017 legislative session. We look forward to the 2018 session and hope to make additional headway on state and federal conservation issues throughout the year.

Habitat Program Updates

CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE TRAILS



Please join us on June 2nd as the Urban Wilderness Trail becomes the first IWF certified sustainable trail. After the certification ceremony, we will plant native trees along the river and volunteers can take one home! More details on page 2.

HABITAT WORKSHOPS



Are you part of a group that wants to know more about creating wildlife-friendly habitats at your home or in your community? IWF offers a Habitat Workshop where we discuss the ways you can fulfill the needs of wildlife and promote conservation.

Last year, we certified 228 new wildlife habitats in Indiana!

For more information or to schedule a workshop for your group, email us at info@indianawildlife.org

Corporate Sponsorship for Conservation



Does your business share the IWF vision of sustainable wildlife and wildlife habitats for Indiana? If your business would like to show its commitment to conservation and be highlighted for doing so through our communications and website, please contact us by email at info@indianawildlife.org or by phone at 317-875-9453.