

DEE'S DEN - DID YOU KNOW ?

FEATURING ARTICLES ON ANIMALS THAT LIVE
INSIDE SUNNYSIDE ACRES URBAN FOREST

OPOSSUM

AN OPOSSUM IS A TYPE OF ANIMAL CALLED A MARSUPIAL. A MARSUPIAL CARRIES ITS BABIES IN A POUCH JUST LIKE A KANGAROO. OPOSSUMS ARE THE ONLY MARSUPIALS IN NORTH AMERICA. THEY HAVE LONG TAILS AND POINTY NOSES. THEIR TAILS ARE PREHENSILE WHICH MEANS THEY CAN USE THEM LIKE A FIFTH HAND. OPOSSUMS HAVE NO VOICE. IF A PREDATOR COMES AFTER THEM, THEY OPEN THEIR MOUTHS REALLY WIDE TO SHOW OFF THEIR 50 TEETH AND HISS LIKE A SNAKE **AND** IF THAT DOESN'T SCARE THE PREDATOR AWAY THEN IT JUST ROLLS OVER AND PLAYS DEAD AND WHEN IT DOES THAT IT ALSO LETS OFF A ROTTEN SMELL WHICH MAKES THE ANIMAL LEAVE. ABOUT 15 MINUTES LATER THE OPOSSUM WAKES UP AND GOES ON ITS WAY. WE CALL THAT 'PLAYING POSSUM'.

OPOSSUMS CAN HAVE MANY BABIES BUT THEY ONLY HAVE 13 NIPPLES TO FEED THEM SO WHEN THEY ARE READY TO GIVE BIRTH, THEY LICK THEIR TUMMIES TO MAKE A NICE PATH FROM THE BIRTH CANAL TO THEIR POUCH AND THE FIRST 13 THAT MAKE IT TO THE POUCH GRAB ONTO A NIPPLE AND STAY THERE UNTIL THEY ARE ABOUT 3 MONTHS OLD. WHEN THEY ARE BORN THEY ARE THE SIZE OF A BEE. WHEN THEY LEAVE THE POUCH THEY LOOK LIKE LITTLE MICE. THE MOTHER TAKES THEM ON HER BACK INTO THEIR HABITAT WHERE SHE TEACHES THEM WHAT TO EAT. AS THEY GET BIGGER THEY START TO LOSE SPACE ON MUM'S BACK AND FALL OFF AND THAT IS HOW THEY ARE RELEASED TO BEGIN THEIR OWN LIVES IN THE FOREST.

POSSUMS, AS THEY ARE COMMONLY CALLED LIKE TO EAT GARBAGE, FRUIT, VEGETABLES, SNAILS, SLUGS, SNAKES AND INSECTS. THEY ALSO CATCH AND EAT RATS AND MICE. PERHAPS THE BEST REASON TO LOVE POSSUMS IS THAT THEY EAT 5,000 TICKS, [WHICH ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR LYME DISEASE] PER SEASON. THEY ARE NOCTURNAL WHICH MEANS THEY FEED AT NIGHT AND LIVE IN TREES, UNDER SHEDS AND ROOT SYSTEMS.

SHOULD YOU EVER SEE A DEAD POSSUM ON THE ROAD, CHECK TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY BABIES IN ITS POUCH...OFTEN THEY WILL STILL BE ALIVE...THEN CALL YOUR LOCAL WILDLIFE SHELTER.

