

PestGazette

SUMMER 2014

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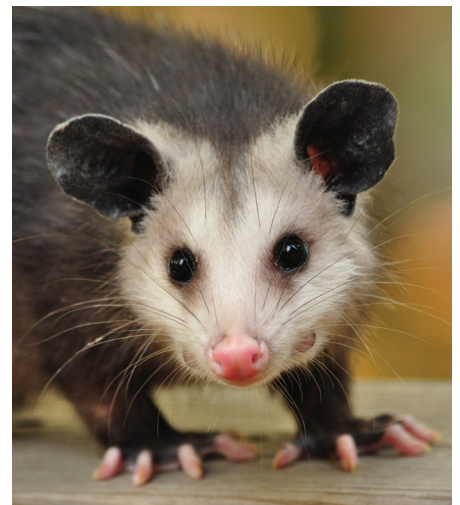
Unwanted Houseguests

In many parts of the country, squirrels are the most common form of backyard wildlife and many people enjoy feeding squirrels to get a better look at the playful antics and acrobatic activities which make them a delight to watch. Unfortunately, just like other forms of wildlife, squirrels can cause damage to homes and can become pests in urban and suburban environments. To make your home less hospitable to squirrels looking for a place to spend the winter, follow these tips: Squirrels only need a hole the size of a baseball to squeeze into a cavity. Perform a visual inspection of your home regularly. Repair water damaged, rotten or broken wood that may allow squirrels to enter attics. Keep rain gutters clear to avoid water damage to fascia boards. Water damaged wood is easy for squirrels to gnaw through. Keep attic vents screened. If there is a high level of squirrel activity in your neighborhood, you might consider heavy duty screens or hard-ware cloth to prevent squirrels from entering. Refrain from feeding squirrels close to the house. Protect backyard bird feeders with squirrel proof devices.

Opossums

As the only marsupial native to North America, the opossum is quite an interesting creature, though not one you want to get close to! Like their more beloved kangaroo relatives, opossums carry their developing offspring (they don't have a unique name like 'joeys') in a pouch. The North American opossum, *Didelphis virginiana*, averages 15 to 20 inches in length and weighs up to 15 pounds. A good size comparison would be a large housecat. Opossums spend most of the year alone but do get together during mating season. Opossums are excellent climbers and are aided by their long, hairless, prehensile tail that they can wrap around tree branches. While young possums occasionally hang upside-down by their tails, adults are too heavy to partake in what appears to be a fun and playful behavior.

Opossums have a varied diet, including insects, fruits, vegetables, garbage, and pet food, but prefer feeding on carri-
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Opossums (continued from page 1)



on when available. While foraging, opossums may also frighten any outdoor pets. When threatened, opossums respond in two distinctly different ways: either by hissing and baring their teeth or playing dead (complete with lying on their back with their tongue hanging out) until the threat is gone.

Opossums are strictly nocturnal, so you are very unlikely to see one out during daylight. They live in a variety of habitats and although they prefer living in forested areas, they are found in urban, rural, and suburban environments. Opossums can make and build dens under houses, beneath porches and decks, and even in attics! Even aspiring zoologists don't want opossums to spend their free time around their home because in addition to carrying their babies in a pouch, opossums are known to carry ectoparasites like ticks

and fleas with them, too. As if you needed any more reasons to keep your distance, opossums have been implicated in transmitting tularemia to humans and can harbor a variety of nasty pathogens like murine typhus, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, leptospirosis, and relapsing fever. Rabies are actually rarely reported in opossums, but remain a possibility.

Due to potential health risks, threats to pets, and possible property damage, control of opossums on your property is a serious matter and should only be handled by a professional. Due to their dietary preferences, the sudden appearance of an opossum may indicate that another animal recently died nearby your house. Please call us today if you have reason to believe opossums are nesting near your home, or would like your property 'possum-proofed! ■

Odorous House Ants

Odorous house ants can be quite challenging to manage, so let us do some detective work and solve your ant problems.

The name says it all, doesn't it? Well, the 'house' and 'ant' part are pretty self-explanatory. The odorous portion comes from the rotten coconut odor these ants emit when they are crushed. This pesky pest ant is found throughout North America and much of Canada, too. Workers are quite small, ranging in size from 1/16" – 1/8" and are brown to black in color. It's very difficult to identify small ants with the naked eye, but if you see an ant that fits that description running around with its abdomen raised in the air, you are most likely looking at an odorous house ant. These are not stinging ants, but that doesn't mean that can't be a major nuisance! Ant colonies are usually contain between 2,000 and 10,000 ants, but huge colonies (up to 100,000!) have been reported.

Odorous house ants are strong trail followers (special chemicals help them walk along the same line as their nestmates), and each trail can have a lot ants following it at the same time. Trailing ants marching through your kitchen are most likely leading between nesting sites, or connecting a

food source and a nest. These ants are strong foragers and actively seek out honeydew, plant secretions, and live and dead insects. Odorous house ants prefer sugars and proteins, so make sure you keep floors and counters clean and keep food sealed because a lot of 'people food' is right in line with what they like!

There are two reasons that these ants are so difficult to control: each colony contains many queens and can have multiple nests indoors and out. Indoors, odorous house ants nest near moisture, and many of the available spots for them are hidden from view (wall voids near hot water pipes/heaters, in bath-traps, crevices around sinks/cupboards, wood damaged by termites). Due to their cryptic nesting behavior, it's important to keep an eye out for stray ants that may indicate a bigger problem. Outdoors they can be found in other ant nests, exposed soil, under stacks of lumber, firewood and bricks. Odorous house ants are capable of walking dozens of feet, so an outdoor nest could be connected to an indoor nest by trails.

If you see ants walking around your kitchen, elsewhere in your home, or outside, please give us a call to investigate the source and control any existing infestation. Odorous house ants can be quite challenging to manage, so let us do some detective work and solve any ant problems that may be present! ■





Mosquitoes

Summertime is a great time to enjoy the outdoors, whether it be attending a ball game, going for a hike, or relaxing on your patio. All of those places share a few things in common; they are fun ways to spend your leisure hours and they put you at some risk of being bitten by a mosquito. No matter what part of the country you live in, and no matter if you live in the city or out in the country, mosquitoes will surely be around this summer. Nearly all female mosquitoes need blood in order to produce eggs and they are willing to risk your swats in order to get it! Male mosquitoes feed on nectar and never bite humans or animals.

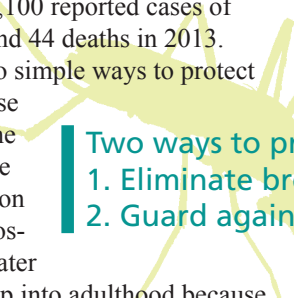
Since they are so small and pesky, it's easy to forget that worldwide, mosquitoes are by far the most dangerous and deadly animals. Sharks, lions, tigers, bears, and snakes all pale in comparison to this tiny insect. Fortunately for us here, the worst mosquito-borne diseases (malaria, yellow fever, and dengue fever) are not present.

That doesn't mean, however, that mosquitoes aren't more than just a nuisance. St. Louis encephalitis and West Nile virus can be significant threats to the health of you and your family. According to the CDC, there were over 1,100 reported cases of West Nile virus and 44 deaths in 2013.

There are two simple ways to protect yourself from these biting flies, and the first is to eliminate breeding sources on your property. Mosquitoes require water in order to develop into adulthood because larvae are aquatic. One of the most challenging aspects of mosquito management is that larvae don't require very much of it at all; less than a half of an inch is enough for some species to develop normally. The key is to not let any water stagnate on your property so keep your eye out for empty pots, bottles, barrels, bird-baths, or other vessels that might hold water. Tip over any water containing items regularly to prevent

larvae from making it to adulthood.

The next step in protecting yourself is to guard against bites by covering exposed skin with clothing and by applying mosquito repellent when you know you will be outdoors. There are several types of mosquito repellents available and many of them are quite effective and are tailored to

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- Two ways to protect yourself from mosquitoes:**
- 1. Eliminate breeding sources on your property.**
 - 2. Guard against bites.**

specific uses (long-term protection, sport, etc.). If you are finding mosquitoes in your home, make sure your doors and windows are kept closed and are properly sealed.

While you can prevent mosquitoes from breeding on your property, mosquitoes have the ability to travel significant distances and you can't control your neighbors! Call us today and we can help protect your family by treating surfaces on which mosquitoes commonly rest. ■



Kids' Activity Corner

This summer, when your kids complain of boredom and can't think of anything to do, send them outside to explore the eye-opening world of insects! Get your kids interested in nature by exploring your own backyard or local park. On a bright and sunny day you are sure to find all kinds of creatures within feet of your front door. You may see ants carrying leaves, honeybees visiting flowers, and dragonflies zooming after flies. You just have to adjust your point of view to notice the small things in life. By focusing on individual insects, you can start to wonder what and why they are doing the things they are doing. Why might a beetle be climbing up a tree? Why do ants seem to be following each other? Where are they going? To make your observations more scientific, try to keep a record of which kinds of insects you find in different parts of your yard on different days and at different times. What kinds of patterns do you see and what reasons can you think of to explain them? There are limitless questions that arise when you start observing the world around you, so get out there and explore! ■

What type of insect did you observe? _____

How many legs does it have? _____ Does it have wings? _____ If yes, how many? _____

What color(s) is it? _____

Is it big or small? _____ Does it make a noise? _____

What else do you notice? _____

Draw a picture of the insect here

www.preferredpest.com



5415 NW 88th St.
Suite 200
Johnston, IA 50131