

# Wildlife Medical Clinic

Fact or Fiction



# Do opossums hang by their tails to sleep?

**False!** Opossums do have a tail that is adapted for grasping and wrapping around things, but they will only use it to hang for short periods of time.



# Does touching a baby animal scare the mom away forever?



**False!** Wildlife will not abandon their babies just because they have been touched by humans.

Birds don't have a very good sense of smell and human scent is not enough of a danger signal to cause mammal mothers to abandon their babies.

We still do not encourage handling of wild baby animals unless medically necessary.



# In a movie when a bald eagle calls, isn't that really the sound of a red-tailed hawk?

**True!** Red-tailed hawks are the owners of that raspy scream you are used to hearing in the movies. While bald eagles may be much more impressive looking, they have a surprisingly weak call. Their call is usually a series of high-pitched whistling notes.



# If you see a fawn without a mom, is it abandoned and in need of help?

**False!** Mom will leave her fawn in tall grass while she finds food to attract less attention to the fawn. Deer leave their babies for most of the day and come back to feed them once or twice a day.



# Do turtles lay eggs?



**True!** When breeding season comes along, turtles use the Earth's magnetic field to travel back to their birthplace to lay their eggs. Mom does not stick around after laying her eggs, so the babies are by themselves and on their own when they hatch.

# Are Peregrine falcons the fastest creature on Earth?

**True!** A diving Peregrine Falcon can reach 200 mph while in a dive – making it the fastest creature on Earth!





# Do raccoons make great pets?



**False!** When they get older, they become agitated easily and get very moody. They become increasingly inquisitive and mischievous. If not provided with constant enrichment, they destroy everything they can get their paws on. Raccoons are renowned escape artists and will also injure themselves in attempting to escape.



# Are opossums ugly, aggressive, and dirty animals?



**False!** As adults, Virginia Opossums are typically not aggressive, often preferring to “play possum” instead of fight. They are also scavengers and help keep the earth clean. They feed on carrion (road kill), invertebrates (such as bugs), fruits, and small vertebrates. They also eat up to 5,000 ticks each season, helping decrease the prevalence of diseases, including Lyme disease.

For more information and  
facts about wildlife,  
please visit our website at:  
[vetmed.illinois.edu/wildlife](http://vetmed.illinois.edu/wildlife)

