### **INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!**

## VIRGINIA OPOSSUM

(Didelphis virginiana)

### **HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ANIMAL?**

#### **DESCRIPTION**

- Robust mid-sized mammal (similar size as a house cat).
- Whiteish face with a pointed snout and largely hairless, scaly tail.
- Hairless, black ears with white/light coloured tips.
- Relatively dense fur with a grey, grizzled appearance.
- Lower legs and feet are black with white toes.
- The hind feet each have a large opposable toe.
- Average weight of a male is 2.7 kg, and a female is 2.1 kg.



REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

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www.gov.bc.ca/invasivespecies

### **PRIMARY THREAT:**

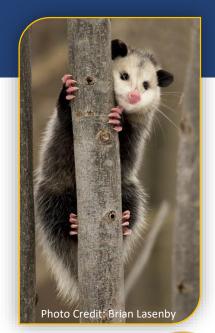
Virginia Opossum consume almost all potential food they encounter and this may include some of B.C.'s species at risk. They also have the potential to spread disease to humans and other animals.

### **SPREAD**

Virginia Opossum are thought to have spread into B.C. naturally from nonnative populations in Washington. Opossums were originally introduced to the western U.S. as pets, for aesthetic reasons, as food, for sport hunting, and for the fur trade. Human-assisted spread is most likely to occur through unintentional transport within motorized vehicles/trains.

Virginia Opossum are known to breed twice a year in B.C. with a litter size of 5-7 young. They will eat whatever food is available including mammals, birds, insects and other invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, vegetation, fruit, and garbage. This variable diet lends to their ability to thrive and spread in human disturbed areas.

Virginia Opossum are found in a wide variety of habitats including grassland, forest, agricultural land, disturbed areas, and suburban/urban habitats. Riparian or other habitats close to water sources are preferred.





For more information: <a href="https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species">https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species</a>

## VIRGINIA OPOSSUM (Didelphis virginiana)

# DISTRIBUTION & STATUS

Virginia Opossum are native to and central eastern North America. The species current native extent spans from northwestern Costa Rica, through Central America and the eastern Unites States, to southern Ontario and Quebec in Canada. The current range of Virginia Opossum in B.C. includes the lower mainland, Fraser Valley, and Hornby Island.



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### **LOOK-ALIKES:**

The Virginia Opossum is the only marsupial found in the U.S. and Canada; its unique appearance suggests that it is highly unlikely that opossums could be confused for any other mammal in B.C.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Do not release Virginia Opossum in the province for any reason.
- Raise awareness to avoid further spread.
- Ensure your garbage is inaccessible to wildlife.
- Report sightings.

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

A Virginia Opossum will "play dead" during stressful situations such as a predator attack. They enter a catatonic stake where the individual is immobile on its side, with its mouth slightly open and salivating. The duration of this state is variable, and recovery is quick once the threat is gone.



Photo Credit: Stan Tekiela

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