

**GROSS-OUT  
DEFENSES**

# Tricky OPOSSUMS



by  
**Catherine Nichols**

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# Tricky OPOSSUMS

by Catherine Nichols

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# In Trouble

The opossum waddled into the backyard.

It didn't see the dog lying under a tree.

The dog, however, spotted the opossum.


It got up and rushed toward the small animal.

The scared opossum flopped on its side.

It didn't move, not even when the dog sniffed it.

Was the opossum dead?

No, it was just pretending.



When someone pretends to be either hurt or dead, people say he or she is "playing possum." This term comes from the way opossums act when they're in danger.







# Acting Tough

When facing an **enemy**, an opossum doesn't always play dead right away.

Often it climbs the nearest tree or fence to escape.

If the opossum can't get away, it tries to scare off its enemy.

It snarls and shows its 50 sharp teeth.

An opossum may also hiss, growl, and screech to make itself seem scary.



Great horned  
owls, dogs, foxes,  
and coyotes are  
some of the animals  
that like to eat  
opossums.







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**Webster, Christine.** *Opossums*. New York: Weigl Publishers (2007).

**Whitehouse, Patricia.** *Opossums*. Chicago: Heinemann Library (2002).

## Learn More Online

To learn more about opossums, visit  
**[www.bearportpublishing.com/GrossOutDefenses](http://www.bearportpublishing.com/GrossOutDefenses)**

## About the Author

Catherine Nichols has written many books for children, including several on animals. She lives in upstate New York with her dog and two cats.



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# Tricky OPOSSUMS

An opossum has a very tricky way to get itself out of danger. When an enemy approaches, the opossum flops over and doesn't move. Is it dead? No, it's just pretending. Look inside to find many more fascinating facts about these tricky creatures!

**Bloody Horned Lizards**  
**Deadly Poison Dart Frogs**

**Disgusting Hagfish**  
**Prickly Porcupines**

**Smelly Skunks**  
**Tricky Opossums**

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