



Opossum Power:

Clean your gear for camp!



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



The Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) is North America's only marsupial. You might know they play dead when frightened. But did you know that they are very clean animals known for grooming themselves and each other? That is Opossum Power!

Invasive species are species that are not native to Wisconsin and can cause harm to our health, the economy or the health of the environment. The seeds of invasive plants often hitchhike on our clothes or in mud stuck to our shoes.

You can use Opossum Power to keep these plants from spreading! When you arrive at camp with clean gear and doing a check again before you leave, you can stop the invasive plants in their tracks.



Here are some steps you can take to help:

- Scrape your footwear at home so you don't transport invasive species to camp.
- Use a lint roller to get attached seeds off of your clothes before you come to camp.
- Use the supplied boot brush or a sturdy stick to clean your boots when you are getting ready to leave for home.
- Learn how to ID invasive species and don't use them in crafts to prevent the spread.

Camp Activity: Play opossum, clean your gear!

This lesson plan is a good way to warm up outdoor participants to prevention actions while stretching and getting ready to explore nature.

• **Inspect your footwear for mud:**

Learn the common places in your gear for hitchhiking mud that can hide seeds. Check out the cracks in boots and the bottom parts of sneakers that can collect mud and seed as well as walking sticks, trekking poles, and strollers.

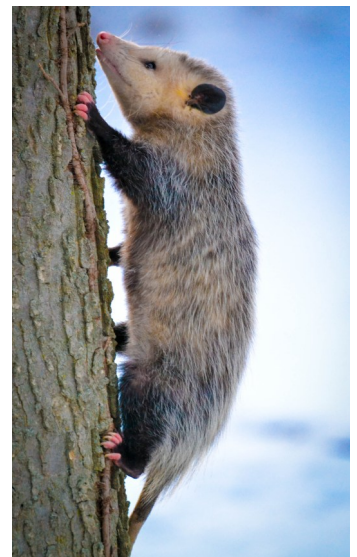


• **Clean mud and seeds off gear:**

Use the provided boot brushes or find a good sturdy stick to get the mud or caked on dirty off your gear. You can help your friends to spot and clean tricky spots, just like a family of opossums cleaning each other while walking around the woods.

• **Use Opossum Power to check gear:**

Concerned that you didn't find all the seeds? Play dead like an opossum and have a friend help check your gear for any of the hitchhiking seeds you can't see!



• **Repeat cleaning before going home:**

This activity applies in reverse! Don't let invasive species track in to your yard or local wild areas. Clean your gear and teach your drivers and adults in your life that they should do this too.



Want more ways you can protect nature by being clean? Go to PlayCleanGo.org