

Woodland Animal Puppet Show (rev. Oct. 09)

Ranger: Phew! I need a rest! Hiking in the park sure does make me tired!
(to audience) Hey, who are you? What are you doing out here on the trail?

(Audience Participation)

Ranger: I'm Ranger _____ and I like to learn about the diverse animal life at Chickasaw National Recreation Area. As a Park Ranger, my job is to share stories about those animals with park visitors.

(Coyote howling, pops out of stage window)

Ranger: My goodness! What is all that howling about, Coyote?

Coyote: (excited) I'm not howling, I am singing. I am singing because I am happy to be alive! I can't believe that I climbed up this tree without falling. Talk about scary! I don't know why any animal would want to live in a tree. My paws kept slipping. I was afraid I was going to fall!

Ranger: You silly goose! You're not built to climb trees! The gray fox is the *only* canine that can climb trees. Did you know that they have long, curved claws to help them hang on?

Coyote: Well, I'm certainly glad that I live on the ground! I bet gray fox climb trees to hide from me. I've never been able to catch one myself, but they sure do look like a good meal. Enough talk about that, I think it's time for me to get my feet back on solid ground.

Ranger: Goodbye, Coyote!

(Skunk appears in stage window)

Skunk: What is this racket about? I'm trying to rest here. There's no need to raise a stink!

Ranger: Hello skunk, I'm resting from my hike. I have met some neat animals out here in the woods today. Speaking of neat animals, what's black and white and frozen all over?

Skunk: Ummmmmm, I don't know! An ice cream sandwich?

Ranger: Nooooo. A skunk at the North Pole! Hahaha!

Skunk: Hahaha! That's a good one... except, skunks don't live in the North Pole! We like warmer weather. Oklahoma has everything that we need to survive. We have plenty of water, lots of food, and places to live. I just love digging up grubs and worms for supper! Yum!

Ranger: Ewww!

Skunk: You know, I think that skunks may be the luckiest animals in the world.

Ranger: Why is that?

Skunk: Our natural perfume, of course! It is made from forms of sulphur and it has a very strong odor. It's sort of like those mineral springs at the park.

Ranger: Oh, so you believe that your stinky body odor is a good thing?

Skunk: Of course, it protects us from other animals. We can spray them with our sweet perfume and it takes FOREVER for the smell to go away. It's the perfect protection!

(Owl appears in stage window)

Owl: Perfect protection, eh? I think that skunks are yummy!

Skunk: Oh my! It's time for me to find a new tree. (skunk disappears)

Ranger: It looks like you're a great horned owl. Why would you want to eat a skunk? I sure do think they stink!

Owl: Not to brag, but I am the *ONLY* animal that regularly eats skunks. I have them all to myself! You know, I can see and hear very well, which allows me to hunt at night. That's why people say that I am nocturnal. I think I'll take a rest until sunset and then find some dinner, I sure do like my night life!

(Owl disappears)

(Opossum appears, hanging in tree)

Opossum: Oh, my aching back! Excuse me, but what are you doing on my tree? You better not eat my delicious wild grapes!

Ranger: Don't worry, I won't eat your grapes. *Well*, how about I just have one?

Opossum: Just ONE! I need all the energy I can get to carry my babies around.

Ranger: I see you have one on your back, why don't you just leave them in your den?

Opossum: I never leave my babies alone. I'm a Marsupial. As soon as my babies are born, they crawl into the pouch on my tummy and they stay there until they are old enough to ride on my back. As a matter of fact, Virginia Opossums are *VERY* special! We are the *only* marsupials in North America.

Ranger: Wow! That's amazing! Is there anything else I should know about opossums?

Opossum: Well, I have a prehensile tail.

Ranger: A pre....what?

Opossum: A p-r-e-h-e-n-s-i-l-e tail! I can curl my tail around tree limbs. It helps me hang on so that I can reach further. It sure is handy when I am grabbing food!

Ranger: I wish I had one of those! That's neat!

Opossum: It sure is! I'm pretty special, if I do say so myself! I'm off to find more food. You know, a mother's work is never done! (Opossum exits)

(Grasshopper, attached to outside of tree, makes ticking, chirping noise)

Ranger: Goodness! I didn't even notice you were there. Your green color blends so well with leaves and grass!

Grasshopper: I have been here all along. What you just heard was little pegs on my legs rubbing against my wings. That's how I attract other grasshoppers.

Ranger: But, how do you hang on to grass and leaves? Do you have a *prehensile* tail like the opossum?

Grasshopper: Noooooo! I have six legs and suction pads on my feet to help me hang on. Have you noticed that I also have two pairs of wings, two large eyes, and little fingers to help me eat? I can't fly very well, but I sure can jump! You know, that's why I'm called a grasshopper. Get it? GRASS... HOPPER? Pretty clever, don't you think?

Ranger: I am glad I took the time to learn more about you. Every plant, animal, and insect in the park is so special! You and the other plants, animals, and insects live in an ECOTONE, a place where the forests of the east meet the prairies of the west. I am amazed by how diverse the park is. I think it's time for me to head back to the Travertine Nature Center to share what I have learned with park visitors. I hope they will help me protect you and your neighbors. Goodbye for now!

Grasshopper: Goodbye!