

# Natural Resources Stewardship Committee (NRSC) News (08.24)

## Invasive Aquatic Plant Update

[Parrot Feather \(\*Myriophyllum aquaticum\*\)](#), a non-native invasive aquatic weed, has been identified in both Lake Atagahi and Lake Ticoa. The NRSC Lake Management Subcommittee (LMSC) and Exotic Invasive Plant Subcommittee (EIPSC) are working with the CFPOA administration to develop a plan to mitigate the weed. A combined EIP task force will identify the location and size of infestations in all of the CF lakes to determine appropriate actions to manage the weed. This information is critical to monitor the effectiveness of mitigation practices and to protect water quality long term.



A combined EIP task force will identify the location and size of infestations in each of the CF lakes to determine appropriate actions to manage the weed. This information is critical to monitor the long term effectiveness of mitigation practices while protecting water quality.

To reduce the possible spread of the weed, members are asked to avoid boating through aquatic plant clusters or attempting to pull or remove plants because fragmenting rooted plants can produce new plants. Lakeside property owners are also asked to not use chemicals along the lake berm or aquatic plants because doing so can harm surrounding native plants and aquatic life. **If you take your boat to another lake inside or outside of Connestee, please avoid aquatic hitchhikers by following the [CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY process](#).**

## Natural Resources Stewardship Plan (NRSP) Promotes A Sustainable Future

The NRSP addresses the most important and impactful components of our native ecosystem such as wildlife (with particular attention given to bears and deer), water quality of lakes and streams, forests, and other native habitats. The NRSP is available to download on the NRSC website at <https://cfpoanrsc2021.wixsite.com/website>. Members are encouraged to review the plan and submit any questions or comments to the NRSC at [cfpoanrsc2021@gmail.com](mailto:cfpoanrsc2021@gmail.com).

## What You Can Do To Help

- I. **Keep Wildlife Wild**—Minimize wildlife habituation (acclimating animals to human behaviors) and frequency of close, potentially harmful human-wildlife interactions and promote the health of wildlife populations.
- II. **Protect Water Resources**—Monitor and protect the quality of Connestee's lakes and streams to provide both residents with safe recreational water and wildlife with healthy habitat.
- III. **Protect Natural Habitats**—Balance the growth of the community and the needs of residents with the responsibility to protect the health and sustainability of natural habitats.

We invite you to visit the NRSC [VOLUNTEER](#) page to read about the dozens of opportunities that there are to volunteer for assisting with education and outreach to "Sign Up" for topics and tasks that interest you. We need help with mitigating invasive plants, writing and publishing articles, maintaining trails, updating the website, and organizing/leading outdoor education events and excursions.

*"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."* Elizabeth Andrew

# Wildlife Watch From the NRSC

## The Opossum

By Judy Merrifield, NRSC Volunteer Writer

The often misunderstood *Didelphis virginiana*, commonly known as the opossum just happens to be our NC state marsupial. Perhaps because it's the only marsupial known this side of Mexico, but even so, it deserves some major accolades. The word opossum comes from the Algonquian meaning white animal. Their habitat of choice is deciduous woodlands but they adapt to urban life easily. Opossums are primarily nocturnal and generally spend the daylight hours in a den or abandoned squirrel nest. Although opossums do not hibernate, they may den for short periods during extremely cold weather. Sadly, opossums only live 1-3 years with most deaths occurring from cars because of their attraction to roadkill carrion

The males average 14 pounds and the females 8 pounds. They possess opposable thumbs on the rear feet and have 50 teeth, the most of any North American mammal. Opossums are typically solitary except during breeding season, which is twice a year between January and October. Gestation is a mere 13 days with the babies being born the size of a bee and only 0.13 gram. Females have 13 nipples arranged in a circle in her pouch. They give birth to up to 12 young but typically only 4-7 will be able to claw their way to the pouch and find a nipple in which to attach. They stay here for about 55 days and then are able to venture out to see the world. She will carry the litter around on her back until they get too large or around 100 days. By that time they have increased their weight 1000 times to 130 grams and are ready to venture out on their own.

You have probably heard the term "playing possum." Opossum will feign death when attacked by a predator but that's not the entire story. When a predator approaches an opossum will hiss and show their teeth. If the animal gets the opossum in their mouth and shakes it, the opossum will not only feign death but will defecate and emit a foul smelling green substance, which is usually enough to make any predator drop it and move on.

Several attributes that make opossums great to have around is that they are resistant to venom and feed on copperheads, rattlesnakes, and cottonmouths with minimal risk of injury or death. They also eat thousands of ticks in a week along with other insects including cockroaches, spiders and maggots, as well as snails, slugs, rats, and mice. So the next time you see an opossum on the side of the road, slow down a bit and think not how unusual they look, but about all the good they do to help balance nature. To learn more about the history, habits and habitats of the opossum read the [NC Opossum Profile](#).



Virginia Opossum

Photo courtesy [NC Wildlife Commission](#).

## DOGS + BEARS = TROUBLE from [BearWise](#)

According to Bearwise a mama bear will always protect her cubs from predators including coyotes. "To a mother bear, a barking dog is a potentially dangerous predator that means harm; if she cannot quickly or easily get her cubs to safety, she will defend them." It may be tempting to let your dog run free, but don't put your dog, yourself or others at risk. **Leash up** and read the [Dogs and Bears Bulletin](#) for more dog owner safety tips.

# What Bears Do In August

From the NRSC and BearWise.org

**August at a Glance:** *Bears have many ways to stay cool during hot summer days. By August, most cubs are weaned. Cubs can often survive on their own if they have to. Bears feast on ripening berries and may travel great distances to dependable food sources. Bears can also decipher complex messages left in the scents of other bears.*



## How Bears Beat The Heat

Bears don't have sweat glands and can't take off their fur coats, so they can't cool off the way people do when temperatures soar. However, bears do lose much of the dense underfur that helps keep them warm when temperatures drop. Shedding some of that fur lets air circulate while still "shading" their skin from the sun. They also pant like dogs and dissipate heat through their paws and other areas with little hair.

Bears avoid the hottest parts of the day and often relax in daybeds under a nice shady tree. They will also spread out on their lightly furred bellies and take a cool mud bath or chill out in a wetland. Bears will sometimes seek shelter from the sun on a cool, shady stone patio, under decks and porches, or in crawl spaces.

Bears are excellent swimmers and paddle around in lakes and sit in streams to cool off. They've also been known to plop down in the kiddie pool or koi pond, run through the sprinklers and do laps in the pool.

## Cubs Are Weaned

Most cubs are weaned during August, giving mom a chance to focus on fattening up herself along with her cubs. Cubs may continue to nurse if they're permitted to, but it's time for them to start feeding themselves. Cubs still stick together and follow mom around learning the finer points of foraging. These lessons will be very important next year when they go out on their own.

Cubs born this year typically weigh between 25 and 40 pounds in August and already look quite a bit different from the big-eared, blue-eyed balls of fur and claws that emerged from the den in spring. While most cubs of the year will stay with their moms until next spring, once they are weaned cubs are often capable of surviving on their own if they have to.

## August Means Berry Good Eating

Berries, called soft mast, are a very important food source for bears. Blueberries, raspberries, wild plums, blackberries, pin cherry, chokecherry, crab apples, serviceberries, viburnum, pawpaw, and other seasonal berries ripen in July and August and persist into September in some parts of the country.

## (What Bears Do In August continued)

Berries are small and grow in dispersed patches; a pound of most wild berries has fewer than 300 calories. Bears are big and trying to get bigger, so they need to find and eat as many berries as possible. Once a bear finds a good patch it will spend many hours patiently stripping off the berries with its tongue and lips.

## Social Signals Influence Bears

In August and September many bears travel extensively throughout and even beyond their home ranges searching for those elusive bumper crops of berries and nuts. How do they know where to go? Some head to reliable sources they've used in the past. Some bears rely on other bears to lead the way. A bear's nose is so sensitive it can decode a lot of information just by sniffing claw marks, tracks and scat. Those scents left behind can help them decide if they want to follow along.

## Bad Food Years Impact Travel

You might think that a bear would naturally go exploring if it was slim pickings at home, but bears seem to have an ability to figure out if a food failure is local or widespread. If it's local, they will leave. If it was a widespread regional failure, like a late frost or an insect infestation or natural disaster that wiped out berry crops, many bears will actually stick closer to home and explore all their options. That's because traveling long distances and burning lots of calories for no reward isn't a good investment of bear energy. So remember to be extra-vigilant if your area has been impacted.

## If You Encounter A Bear In Your Backyard



- From a safe distance, make loud noises, shout, or bang pots and pans together to scare away the bear.
- When the bear leaves, remove potential attractants such as garbage, bird seed/feeders, or pet food.
- Ask neighbors to remove attractants.
- Check your yard and surrounding areas for bears before letting out your dog. (Dogs + Bears = Trouble)

**Explore our online resources at [BearWise.org](https://www.BearWise.org) so you can avoid attracting bears.**

**Thanks for doing your part to keep bears wild.**

Thank you, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for the swimming bear photo

BearWise®. Created by bear biologists. Supported by State Wildlife Agencies.

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