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Eastern ratsnake

(Pantherophis alleghaniensis)

- Non-venomous.
- Extremely important predator of rats, mice, and other rodents. Will also climb trees and consume bird eggs.
- Generally non-aggressive and will occasionally mimic a rattlesnake.
- Common throughout Maryland.



By Chris Parker, Flickr CC

Red Fox

(Vulpes vulpes)

- Red foxes are omnivores which eat berries, fruits, grasses, birds, and small mammals.
- Some red foxes imported for hunting by European settlers.
- Gray foxes (also found in MD) have a black tip on the end of their tail vs white tip on red fox.
- Can carry rabies and canine distemper.
- Common throughout Maryland.



By Jeff Burcher, Flickr CC

Jumping Spider

- Has venom but rarely bites and venom non-toxic to humans.
- Important predator of pest insects. Spiders eat more insects than birds and mammals combined and can consume up to 2,000 insects in their lifetime.
- Has large eyes because it actively hunts.
- Males “sing” and “dance” to attract mates. Occasionally, females will eat non-attractive males. 😊



By Paul Boxley, Wikimedia Commons

Mute Swan

(Cygnus olor)

- Mute swans were introduced from Europe.
- Mute swans are highly aggressive and will chase other nesting waterfowl off nests.
- Mute Swans eat up to 8 pounds of “submerged aquatic vegetation” or “SAV” every day. SAV is an important nursery area for the fish and crabs that are critical to the Chesapeake Bay estuary.
- Occasional in the Chesapeake.



By Cody Pope, Wikimedia Commons

Virginia Opossum

(Didelphis virginiana)

- Opossums are masters at playing dead, but the reaction is actually involuntary response to danger.
- Opossums are almost immune to rabies, likely due to their lower body temperature. They can still contract the disease, but cases are rare.
- Opossums are also immune to snake venom. A serum is being developed from opossums as a cheaper/safer antivenom treatment for humans.
- On average, opossums can eat up over 5,000 ticks in a week which can impact Lyme disease spread in certain areas.
- Common throughout Maryland.



By Dolovis, Wikimedia Commons

Turkey Vulture

(Cathartes aura)

- The turkey vulture has an excellent sense of smell to locate its food.
- Turkey vultures are the only scavenger birds that can't kill their prey.
- Turkey vultures have strong stomach enzymes that allow them to safely digest rotting flesh. They help clean up areas and prevent the spread of harmful bacteria from decaying animals.
- Turkey vultures can travel up to 200 miles a day!