

# Weird & Wonderful Wildlife Facts

by Education and Visitor Center Services Coordinator Kim Compton

While out on the trails this summer, contemplate these weird and wonderful wildlife facts.

## Did you know...



...**Songbird** parents regurgitate their food for their young? It helps the young to digest the food before they are old enough to eat it whole.



...A **sandhill crane** fossil found in Nebraska was determined to be 2.5 million years old? This makes the crane one of the oldest bird species in the world.



...**Mushroom mycelia** can spread for miles? Mycelia are the vegetative parts of a fungus that absorb nutrients from the environment.



...Only male **cicadas** make noise? The females lack the resonating chamber in the abdomen that makes the loud noise. However, both males and females have a structure in the front of their abdomens that functions like an eardrum and allows them to hear the calls.



...**Turkey vultures** eat dead carcasses? This helps to clean up the natural area and speed up decomposition. Because the business of eating dead animals can be rather unclean, the turkey vulture has no feathers on its head so they don't get dirty, and the vulture urinates on its legs to disinfect them.



...**Monarch butterflies** are the only insects that perform a two-way migration? The final generation of the summer will fly all the way to Mexico for the winter and then up to Texas and Oklahoma where they will lay the eggs for the next generation that flies further north. It takes about three generations to get to northern Illinois.



...**Toads** do not give you warts? They do have a poison gland, however, that makes predators spit them out if they try to eat them. It is unharmed to the human touch.



...The **Chinese praying mantis** is one of the few insects that can swivel its neck? This is how they can turn to gaze right into your eyes.



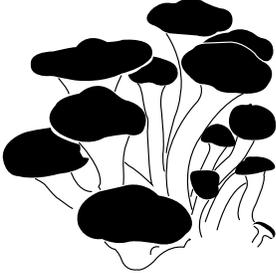
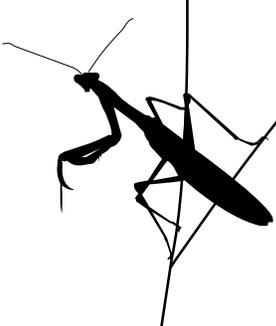
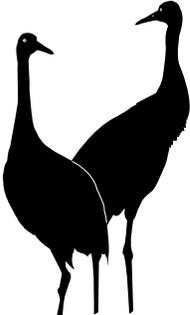
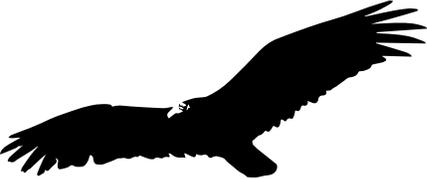
...**Opossums** not only play dead when they feel threatened but they release a green mucous while doing so that further convinces any predator that the opossum is not alive? It smells like rotting flesh!

# Bizarre Behaviors Bingo

*Nature is full of beautiful living things, but what about the weird stuff?*

Overtime, we have been able to see unique adaptations that allow living organisms to live their best life in their ecosystem. Below is a bingo sheet with different nature-related items for you to find while outside. Each item reflects a plant or animal that has a “weird” behavior. Read about these strange or unusual adaptations on the previous Seasonal Sightings page.

**Go explore. How many can you find?**

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  <p>Find a mushroom on the ground</p>  |  <p>Look for birds</p>                            |  <p>Find a toad or an insect that a toad would eat</p> |
|  <p>Look for opossum tracks</p>   |  <p>Find a praying mantis</p>                    |  <p>Find a monarch butterfly</p>                      |
|  <p>Listen for sandhill cranes or Look for them in the prairie or wetlands</p> |  <p>Find a cicada or cicada shell on a tree</p> |  <p>Look in the sky for turkey vultures</p>          |

**Weird but True Animals**

by National Geographic Kids

**Weird and Wonderful Plants**

by Time for Kids

**Perfectly Peculiar Plants**

by Chris Thorogood



**Go for a Hike!**

The best way to learn more about nature is to get out and explore! Take this bingo sheet with you to any of the McHenry County Conservation District Conservation Areas and see how many things you can discover!