

# 2018 LANCASTER COUNTY JUNIOR ENVIROTHON

## MAMMALS



**WOODLAND JUMPING MOUSE:** The woodland jumping mouse is found throughout Pennsylvania. It's recognized by a bright yellowish brown back and sides and white belly. The tail is tipped with a white tuft. This mouse prefers cool, moist forests. It would rather live near a stream than a field. The woodland jumping mouse eats seeds, berries, nuts, bugs, and worms. They are nocturnal. They make their homes in burrows and use trails made by other animals such as mole and shrews. The mouse moves by walking, hopping, and even leaping. The way the mouse can switch movements easily helps it to stay concealed. Its long tail aids it in balancing as it

leaps and climbs. Its life span in the wild is approximately 3-4 years. Predators of the woodland jumping mouse include owls, snakes, members of the weasel family, and the bobcat.



**MINK:** A common *carnivore* found near water, the mink is a member of the *mustelid* or weasel family. They prey upon muskrats, fish, other mammals, and marsh birds. Like most *mustelids*, they are agile and fierce fighters, killing prey with a hard bite to the back of the skull. On land, they travel at a slow, arch-backed walk or a bounding lope, which they can keep up for miles. They swim and dive well; a webbing of stiff hairs between the toes of their hind feet helps them in water. Generally *nocturnal*, the mink is active year-round. Mink den in abandoned woodchuck tunnels, hollow logs, vacant muskrat houses (owners of which they may have eaten), and holes in

stone piles, and beneath large tree roots. The mink is the main predator of muskrat. Mink survive best where water is unpolluted, for this is where the greatest concentration and variety of prey is located.



**EASTERN PIPISTRELLE:** Eastern Pipistrelle is the state's smallest bat. The bat's wingspan is just 8-10 inches. The fur of the Eastern Pipistrelle is tri-colored including gray, yellow, and brown. The bat takes flight in early evening and makes short oval shaped patterns in the air just above the treetops. During the summer woods near water is a favorite shelter. Eastern Pipistrelle hibernates from September-April deep inside caves. They dangle in the spot for months building water condensation on their bodies. They are very sound sleepers. When active out of hibernation, the Eastern

Pipistrelle eats flies, grain moths, and other insects. Young bats called pups are born in June and July. Twins are common to this type of bat. The Eastern Pipistrelle can live for approximately 15 years in the wild.



**RIVER OTTER:** An *aquatic* mammal not often seen, the river otter belongs to the *mustelid* family like the weasel and mink. Excellent swimmers, otters feed on fish, crayfish, frogs, snakes, muskrats and other small mammals. A den is made in a stream bank or at the base of a hollow tree. Young pups born from February to April weigh 4-5 ounces and blind and toothless at birth. As pups grow they remain curious and playful. Otters are mainly nocturnal. Otters do not store food for winter and do not hibernate. Clean water supporting aquatic life is the foundation of habitat needs for the otter. Anti-pollution laws safeguard

these waters and protect the otter's habitat needs. This *carnivore* has been protected from hunting or trapping since 1952. To provide wildlife *diversity*, the Pennsylvania Game Commission has reintroduced river otters beginning in the 1983. Biologists have released 110 river otters into six areas; Pennsylvania's otter population numbers are growing. Wildlife Conservation Officers and other Game Commission employees have observed otters and otter sign along both sides of the Susquehanna River, and at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.



**BEAVER:** The largest *rodent* found in the state these herbivores feature a flat tail. This tail is adapted for use in swimming, and the tail also supports the beaver when it sits erect or gnaws on a tree on dry land. Their front paws include long claws for digging and work a bit like a human hand and are used in the construction of damming water and building a family lodge. The hind feet have webbed toes. The second claw from the outside one each hind foot is split and used like a comb for grooming. The beaver's front teeth never stop growing. It must cut wood almost each day keep the teeth in

check. Beavers can stay underwater for up to 15 minutes; during a dive, the heart slows and valves close off the ears and nostrils. Lodge building affects many other wildlife species. This *furbearer's* activity provide habitat for ducks, geese, shorebirds, fish, and amphibians. Otters, raccoons, osprey, and other predators are attracted by the rich variety of wildlife and food. By the beginning of the twentieth century there were few beavers in Pennsylvania. In 1903 a law was passed protecting this *herbivore*. In 1917 the Game Commission released a pair of Wisconsin beavers. This successful reintroduction led to the reopening of beaver trapping in 1934, a tradition that continues today.



**STAR NOSED MOLE:** The star-nosed mole is named for a cluster of 22 pink, fleshy, tentacle-like feelers at the end of its snout. Found throughout Pennsylvania, the star-nosed mole prefers deep mucky soils in wet meadows, bottomlands, marshes, and swamps. Its tunnels may open directly onto water, because the star-nosed mole is a good swimmer. In winter, these moles have been seen swimming under ice. They feed on

aquatic *macroinvertebrates*, fish, and *crustaceans*. On land, the star-nosed mole eats mainly earthworms, grubs, and slugs. When a mole is searching for food the tentacles on its snout twitch constantly. It has been long thought these tentacles were touch sensors but recent experiments indicate the tentacles are used to sense the electrical fields produced by earthworms. They live in small colonies and share burrow systems. The star nosed mole can be preyed upon by animals that hunt from the air, land, and water.



**MUSKRAT:** The nation's most abundant *furbearer*, this *rodent* lives on or near the still or slow moving water of ponds, marshes, streams and rivers. Common in Pennsylvania, the muskrat feeds on the roots and stems of *aquatic* plants, especially cattails. Like its cousin the beaver, the muskrat constructs lodges of vegetation or they burrow into the banks of streams. Muskrats eat a small amount of animal protein like crayfish, freshwater mussels, small fish, and frogs. Muskrats have a high reproduction rate with an adult female having two, three, or even four litters a year. Commonly preyed upon by mink, minks prefer to hunt the young or sick because adult muskrats fight hard. The average lifespan is

12 months but may live as long as 5 or 6 years. Through feeding, muskrats can open up areas of densely vegetated marsh that can benefit waterfowl and other *aquatic* wildlife. They don't hibernate during the winter; they depend on grassy plants within swamps and bogs.



**BLACK BEAR:** Black bears are powerfully built animals with weights ranging from 140-400 pounds, with rare individuals in Pennsylvania exceeding 800 pounds. In Pennsylvania, most black bears are black with an occasional cinnamon phase. In other parts of their range they may be blonde or brown. These *omnivores* have an excellent sense of smell, average hearing, and poor eyesight. Bears walk in a flat-footed or *plantigrade* manner. Their winter den may be a hollow tree or log, a cave; it may be a "nest" on top of the ground, or under a fallen tree or brush. In the northeast, which is prime bear habitat, bears prefer

brushy swamps. Black bear numbers have been increasing from a statewide population of around 4000 in the 1970's to around 18,000 today. This has caused an increase in bear/human conflicts. To reduce these conflicts the Game Commission has increased the length of the bear-hunting season in areas where the population has grown the most and has made it illegal to feed bears.



**SOUTHERN BOG LEMMING:** This species is not a true lemming but are similar to voles. Bog lemmings are northern *rodents* preferring moist bogs, swamps and forest meadows. They live in colonies with runways that connect the nests. This *herbivore* eats stems and seeds of grasses, along with berries, fungi, and mosses. Southern bog lemmings often share habitats with red-backed voles, meadow voles, white-footed mice, and deer mice. They are an important part of the food chain, occupying the *niche* as *prey* for a variety of *predators* including hawks, owls, fox, and others. Because of its geographical

location, Pennsylvania is located within the southern-most area of many northern mammals' ranges. This is true of the southern bog lemming.



**MOOSE:** Moose are the largest member of the deer family. Male moose are recognizable by large antlers that can spread 6 feet from end to end. All moose have a long face and muzzle that dangles over their chin. A flap of skin call a bell sways under the moose's throat. During the summer, moose will *browse* high grasses and shrubs rather than lower their heads to ground level. Moose are often found in wetlands feeding on aquatic plants. They do not hibernate. In winter, they eat shrubs, pinecones, and use their hooves to clear snow

to get to mosses. Their hooves act as snowshoes and support their heavy bodies in muddy and marshy ground. Moose were once a part of the Pennsylvania landscape. Sometimes called the black moose, they were found wading into woodland wetlands. The last known Pennsylvania moose was killed about 1790 near the Juniata River which enters the Susquehanna River from the west. Today moose are known as an extirpated species in Pennsylvania. Extirpated means the species although not extinct has disappeared from large areas of its original, natural habitat.



**SILVER HAired BAT:** The silver haired bat is medium in size. Its name comes from its fur that is blackish brown tipped with white giving it a silver appearance. This bat takes shelter in wooded areas in wetland spots along lakes and streams. When *roosting* it's most comfortable in dense foliage with old established trees called Old Growth forests, sliding behind loose bark of a tree, or in a hollow tree. They are rarely found in caves. This type of bat eats early and can be seen out feeding just before the sun starts to set. Silver haired bats like to eat flies, midges (gnats), leafhoppers, mosquitoes, moths,

ants, crickets, and occasionally spiders. Rather than hibernating the silver haired bat migrates south out of Pennsylvania. Human activities such as logging, clear cutting for development and roads and general deforestation may pose a threat to this bat in the not too distant future.



**MASKED SHREW:** Masked shrews are found throughout North America. They *molt* twice a year. Meaning in winter their fur is dark brown almost black and in summer its fur grows in to a light brown color. Masked shrews shelter in wooded areas, under rocks, often in swamps. They are good swimmers but rarely enter water. Their ability to see and smell is poor, but they have a well-developed sense of touch. They eat insects, worms, slugs, snails, spiders, moss, and seeds. Masked shrews move through tunnels and have been known to eat three times their body weight. They are active both day and night. Birds of

prey, herons, foxes, and weasels can prey on them. A masked shrew has a lifespan of about one year and a half.