

The following are examples of interpretive signs you will find on the Pfeiffer Loop trail near the Big Dam Bridge:

Arkansas Songbirds

The noise is more important than you think.

A songbird is a bird in which the vocal organ typically is developed in such a way as to produce a diverse and elaborate bird song. This group contains some 4,000 species found all over the world. It is thought that songbirds evolved 50 million years ago in the the South Pacific, before spreading around the world.

Bird song is full of important information about territory, the identity and whereabouts of the bird, and also signals they are looking for a mate. While almost all living birds give calls of some sort, well-developed songs primarily belong to the songbirds. These are just a few of the many songbirds that call Arkansas home.

Northern Mockingbird



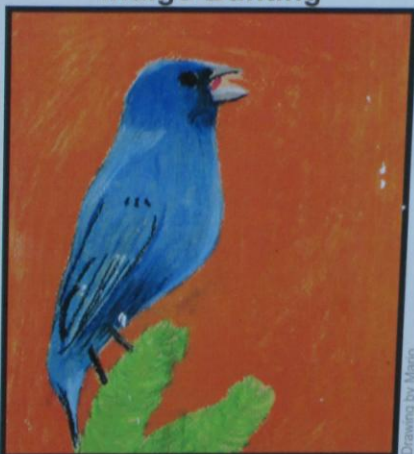
Drawing by Teana

Carolina Chickadee



Drawing by Alexandria

Indigo Bunting



Drawing by Mario

American Robin



Drawing by Francesco



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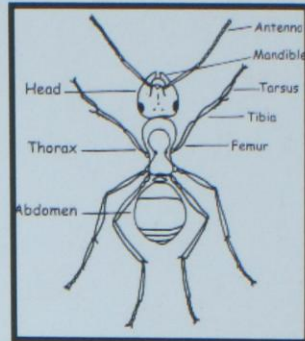
*This program is supported, in part, by the Arkansas Arts Council,
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Arthropods

Why having no spine is very important!

- . **Organism Type** : Invertebrate
- . **Diet**: Widely Varied
- . **Average Wild Life Span**: Hours to Years
- . **Size**: Microscopic to a few meters
- . **Did you know?**: Arthropods have over a million described species, making up more than 80% of all described living animal species.



An arthropod is an invertebrate (no backbone) having an exoskeleton (external skeleton), a segmented body, and jointed appendages.

Arthropods are characterized by their jointed limbs. The rigid covering of their bodies limits growth, so arthropods replace it periodically by molting, or shedding the old exoskeleton after growing a new one that is not yet hardened. The arthropod body plan consists of repeated segments, each with a pair of appendages.

The oldest arthropod fossil found is thought to be 555 million years old.

Arthropods contribute to the human food supply both directly as food, and more importantly as pollinators of crops. However, some specific species are known to spread severe disease to humans, livestock, and crops.

A few arthropods, such as barnacles, are hermaphroditic, that is, each can have the organs of both sexes. However, individuals of most species remain of one sex all their lives. Newly born arthropods have diverse forms, and insects alone cover the range of extremes.



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North American Beaver

Castor canadensis

- **Organism Type :** Mammal
- **Diet:** Herbivore
- **Average Wild Life Span:** Up to 24 years
- **Size:** Length nose to tail, 31-51 inches (80-130 cm)
- **Weight:** 60 lbs (1.8-10.4 kg)
- **Group Name:** Colony
- **Did you know?:** Beavers are the second-largest rodent in the world



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These large rodents move with an ungainly waddle on land but are graceful in the water, where they use their large, webbed rear feet like swimming fins, and their paddle-shaped tails like rudders.

When sites are available, beavers burrow in the banks of rivers and lakes. But they also transform less suitable habitats by building dams. Felling and gnawing trees with their strong teeth and powerful jaws, they create massive log, branch, and mud structures to block streams.

Domelike beaver homes, called lodges, are also constructed of branches and mud. They are often located in the middle of ponds and can only be reached by underwater entrances. These dwellings are home to extended families.

North American beavers have one litter per year between December and May but peaking in January. Unlike most other rodents, beaver pairs are monogamous. Pregnancy lasts 128 days and they average three kits per litter.



Drawing by Ja'ie



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Mallard Duck

Anas platyrhynchos

- . **Organism Type :** Bird
- . **Diet:** Omnivore
- . **Average Wild Life Span:** 5 to 10 years
- . **Size:** 20 to 26 in (50 to 65 cm)
- . **Weight:** 2 to 3 lbs (1 to 1.4 kg)
- . **Group name:** Sord (in flight)
- . **Did you know?:** Mallards are thought to be the most abundant duck on Earth.



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Mallards can be found in almost any body of freshwater across Asia, Europe, and North America. However, they can also be found in saltwater, brackish water and in wetlands.

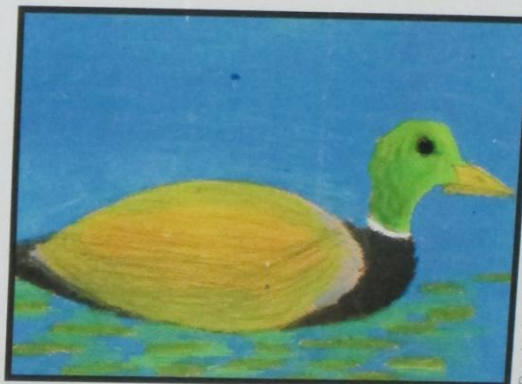
The drake, or male, is the more distinctively colored of the mallards. Its iconic green head sits atop a white neckband that sets off a chestnut-colored chest and gray body. Females are drab brown in color, but have shiny purple-blue wing feathers that are easily seen on the side of their wings when at rest or in flight.

Mallard groups can often be seen head dipping or completely upending in the water. This species is not a diving duck, spending most of their time near the surface.

Mated pairs migrate to and breed in the northern parts of their range and build nests on the ground or in a protected cavity, laying about a dozen eggs.



Drawing by Sierra



Drawing by Esther



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VENOMOUS VS. NON-VENOMOUS

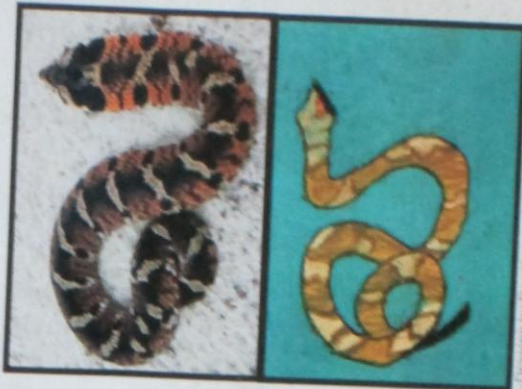
Give a Snake a Break!

Cottonmouth, *Agkistrodon piscivorus*



Drawing by Francisco

Eastern Hognose, *Heterodon platirhinos*



Drawing by Huggie

General Identifiers of Venomous Snakes

- Venomous snakes will have a more triangular head because of the venom glands and have an elliptical pupil like a cat's eye. It looks like a small vertical slit in the middle of the eye.
- If the snake has a rattle on its tail it is a rattlesnake, and therefore venomous.
- Venomous Snakes in the U.S. tend to have varying colors. Most snakes that are one solid color are completely harmless.
- Some venomous snakes in the U.S. will have a small depression between the eye and the nostril. This is called a pit (hence "pit viper"), which is used by the snake to sense heat in their prey.
- Many Venomous snakes are now critically endangered or threatened. It is against federal law to kill or interfere with any endangered species, including protected venomous snakes.

General Identifiers of Non-Venomous Snakes

- Nonvenomous snakes have a spoon-shaped rounded head due to the lack of venom pouches and a round pupil in the eye.
- Some nonvenomous snakes do mimic the rattler by rattling their tails, but lack the rattle "buttons" that sound like little salt shakers.
- Some nonvenomous snakes mimic the patterns and behaviors of venomous snakes. Remember, "Red on Black, Venom Lack" when examining a snake's coloration.
- To tell the difference between a venomous water moccasin/cottonmouth and a harmless water snake: Check to see if it is swimming with only its head above water, or whether most of its body is floating, too. If just the head is showing, it is most likely a harmless water snake, but if the body is floating too, it could be a water moccasin.



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Virginia Opossum

Didelphia virginiana

- **Organism Type :** Mammal
- **Diet:** Omnivore
- **Average Wild Life Span:** 2 to 4 years
- **Size:** Length nose to tail, 2.5 ft (76 cm)
- **Weight:** 8.8 to 13.2 lbs (4 to 6 kg)
- **Did you know?:** The Virginia opossum is the only marsupial found in the United States and Canada.



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Opossums are scavengers, often visiting human homes to raid trash containers. They will also find a feast in dead animals. Opossums also eat grass, nuts, and fruit. They will hunt small mammals, bugs, and even chickens.

These animals coined the term "playing possum." Because most predators will not eat a dead animal, opossums will flop to their sides on the ground with their eyes closed or staring into space, sticking out their tongues.

Opossums spend much of their time high above the ground. They are great climbers due to sharp claws and by a long prehensile (gripping). Opossums nest in tree holes or in dens made by other animals.

Opossums give birth to helpless young the size of honeybees, which then crawl to and develop in the mother's pouch. As they get larger, they will go in and out, and sometimes ride on the mother's back. Opossums may birth as many as 20 babies in a litter, but fewer than half of them survive.



Drawing by Marquella



Drawing by Jamie



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