



**Crystal Bridges**  
Museum of American Art

## **Mammals & Reptiles**

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# Copperhead Snake

## Recognizing a Copperhead

**NARRATOR:** Jay Schneider, assistant superintendent of Hobbs State Park tells us how to recognize the Copperhead snake and in what type of environment Copperheads are most likely to be found.

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** Copperheads are found throughout Arkansas, a very populous snake, one of our venomous snakes. So they have the retractable fangs, they inject the venom. The misnomer is poison's something you ingest orally. We don't have poisonous snakes unless you're going to eat them. So they are venomous. So Copperheads are light brown in color with bands that look like copper colored leaves, they're kind of triangle shaped.

**JAY CONTINUES:** All of our venomous snakes in Arkansas, in the Ozarks at least, have a triangle shaped head or their back of their head is larger than the body of the snake or the neck. So it looks like a triangle with a pointy snout or angular, if you will use that term. And that's the easy way to tell any of our snakes.

They're found everywhere. They're found in rock crevices and downed hollow logs. In the summertime when it's warm, if you're out on the grounds after the sun goes down, they're going to come out and actually bask or lay on warm services. So those hardened trails, those gravel trails, we've all probably seen them crossing the road in the middle night. They're absorbing heat because snakes are not warm blooded, they're coldblooded.

**JAY CONTINUES:** They get their heat from outside their body, so they're going to absorb what they're laying on. So they're going to be out of the sun in the daytime, in a hollow log, in a rock pile, in a crevice or crack, which in the Ozarks, there's quite a few of those around. And then at night they're going to come out in the summertime and look for heat source, to not cool down too much.

[End of Stop]

# Copperhead Snake

## Being Safe Near Copperheads

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** If you're concerned about copperheads in the wild, the best thing to do for a human to prevent that interaction is to stay on the trails. If you are adventurous and are going off trail, they are going to shelter in rocks and crevices and downed trees. So when you're stepping over something, step on top of it, then step away from it. Don't bring your foot down right next to a log because that's where the snake is going to be and that you're going to step on.

Now the good news for copperheads is they're the most docile venomous snake that we have.

There's been lots of studies done where if you step on one and move away, they're probably not going to strike.

**JAY CONTINUES:** Can I guarantee that?

Obviously not. And when they are coiled up in a S shape or in a rounded pile, that is their defense posture. So they're ready to strike. If they're stretched out, they can't reach any further. So they're less of a threat to you. But if they're coiled up, it's kind of like someone that's got their arms pulled into their chest. If you get too close, they can extend their arm and punch you. But if you're a snake and you're already laid out, you can't reach much further. So that's their defense posture. They're sort of giving you a little clue that, "Hey, you're a little too close. I'm going to coil up. I'm going to get ready to strike."

[End of Stop]

# Eastern Gray Squirrel (Black)

## The Unusual Coloring

**NARRATOR:** Many visitors to Crystal Bridges are lucky enough to see one of the black squirrels that live on the museum grounds. Jay Schneider, assistant superintendent of Hobbs State Park, explains these squirrels' unusual coloring.

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** Black squirrels are gray squirrels by scientific name, but they are... the term is melanistic. We all know about albinism. When you're an albino, you have a lack of pigment. So you're white, you usually have red eyes because you're reflecting the blood capillaries and the eyes are reflected back to red. We all know about albinos. Black squirrels are the exact polar opposite of that.



**JAY CONTINUES:** They're melanistic, which means they have an overabundance of pigment, all black. Similar to humans with blue eyes and red hair, it's a recessive gene. So it's out there. In some areas, there's more than others because of the genetic breeding. Different types of the country claim to be the Black Squirrel Capital of the United States. That's just simply an overabundance of those black squirrels in that area. And they're breeding, so obviously, that recessive gene is coming more to the forefront. So it's technically a gray squirrel. There's nothing wrong with that animal. It's just an anomaly.

[End of Stop]

# Eastern Gray Squirrel and Fox Squirrel

## Differences Between Gray and Fox Squirrels

**NARRATOR:** Two types of squirrels are found on Crystal Bridges' grounds, the gray and fox squirrels. Jay Schneider, assistant superintendent of Hobbs State Park, explains how to tell the two species apart.

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** Gray squirrels are going to be seen most of the time up in the trees. They're a little smaller bodied squirrel. They have that long, flat, bushy tail, and they're gray in color, but their hairs are tipped with white. But their head and back are usually darker, their bellies white or gray in color. So, as you're looking up, you're probably going to see the white belly, and then that curled, grayish tail. A little larger squirrel you're also going to see is a fox squirrel.

**JAY CONTINUES:** And foxes, as most of us know in Arkansas, are usually red. Not only type of fox, but most of them we're going to see in the urban areas are red, and that's where they get their name, their semblance. They're red in color. They're a little larger bodied than the gray squirrel, and they're going to be found mostly on the ground.

So, they're both found in similar type areas. They're both going to be in a mixed hardwood forest, which is going to be your oaks and hickories, and simply because they're searching for food. So, you've got acorns. You've got hickory nuts. You've got that hard mass that they're looking for, and we all have seen a squirrel, whether it's up on a tree, having a snack with a nut, with both those forepaws holding it, and chewing through the shell and then eating it.

**JAY CONTINUES:** And it's just depending on which type of squirrel. You're probably going to see it on the ground or up in a tree.

[End of Stop]

# Eastern Gray Squirrel and Fox Squirrel

## Squirrel Nests

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** Sometimes you see a great big nest up in a tree and think, is that a hawk? Or is that an owl? Or what's made that? They make two types of nests. The temporary ones are leaves and twigs high up above the ground, they look more like a ball. Think of a nest, usually for birds, is half. It's got a flattened top, with a rounded ball-shaped bottom. They're going to be round all the way around, they have a roof on them. It looks like a big ball of leaves up in the trees.

It could be temporary. It can be more permanent, is usually going to be in a hollow tree where we're not going to find it. That's where they're going to raise their young.

**JAY CONTINUES:** In the wintertime, they're going to be using those temporary nests high up in the trees to get out of the weather.

They have two breeding seasons usually, one is going to be in the winter, one's going to be in the middle of summer. So they can actually have two sets or two litters of babies per year. The easiest way to tell is when they come out of the den nest, they're going to be smaller in size. As you see them on the ground, they're definitely smaller. They're going to be a little slower, like any juvenile, they're learning the ropes to survival.

[End of Stop]

# Eastern Gray Squirrel and Fox Squirrel

## Benefits of Squirrels

**NARRATOR:** Assistant Superintendent of Hobbs State Park, Jay Schneider explains how squirrels help regenerate the forest.

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** The benefit they're going to bring is food for other animals. Again, circle of life. And also, the dispersal of those seeds, for generation of all those trees. Squirrels burying their nuts. We've all heard and read about them saving nuts for the winter and then they forget, that's actually a good thing for the forest. And not all those trees will germinate and grow and grow, but there's that chance and they help move that along. And you know, trees can't move. Their seeds can only roll so far.

**JAY CONTINUES:** So when you have squirrels moving them from one area to another, that's how you get forest growth and regeneration.

[End of Stop]



# Three-toed Box Turtle

## Three-toed Box Turtle

**NARRATOR:** Assistant Superintendent of Hobbs State Park, Jay Schneider, describes the three-toed box turtle, the most common type of land turtle found at Crystal Bridges.

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** Throughout Arkansas, and especially on Crystal Bridges grounds, we have box turtles. The most common one we have in any forested area is going to be the three-toed box turtle. As the name says, and I love it when science names it for things that we can recognize. It's named for its back feet. It has three toes most of the time. Here's where science gets involved. Most of the time. There are occasionally a three-toed box turtles that four toes on their rear feet, but it's uncommon.

**JAY CONTINUES:** They have five toes in the front, three in the back. So unique. So it's named for that. And the term box. It's not because it lives in a shoe box under your bed as the children's story goes. It's because its shell has a hinge where it can withdraw its legs and head and tail and then close. The shell has a hinge on it like the lid of a box. So it's for protection.

Box turtles are found throughout Arkansas. They're found crossing roads. And they don't get much larger than a baseball hat. They're small, so they're cute. They're going to be round, brown to olive green in color. They're going to have light-colored markings on their shell, usually in a kind of a starburst pattern, but it's going to be subdued. It's not real obvious.

**JAY CONTINUES:** Some of the three-toed box turtles on their head and face have red or yellow polka dots. Again, helping them with camouflage. Some of them almost turn almost a burnt orange color.

[End of Stop]

# Three-toed Box Turtle

## How to Help the Box Turtle

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** Those turtles are around for a long time. They'll live at least 35 years in the wild, sometimes longer. Longest one documented, it was in Missouri, I believe, 70 years old. They don't get very big. They're full grown about five to seven year range. They're wild animals. They're not meant to be pets. So if you move one of those turtles, if you pick it up, put it in your car, drive home, 10 miles, look at it and then let it go, it's going to go back to where it was found. So it's going to have to cross all those barriers to get back to where it's going. So we're actually hurting them if we're picking them up and moving them long distance. If you're stopping your car, putting your hazards on, no one's coming, helping him across the road, you're helping them survive that obstacle.

**JAY CONTINUES:** But anytime you move them, they're going to try to get back to them and you do have to have a permit to have a turtle as a pet.

[End of Stop]

# White-tailed Deer

## How to Find White-tailed Deer

**NARRATOR:** Crystal Bridges is home to a resident population of white-tailed deer. Jay Schneider, assistant superintendent of Hobbs State Park, explains the relationship between the deer and their natural environment.

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** There's several ways you can be a nature detective, if you will, to look for white-tailed deer on the grounds. Obviously, the easiest thing to find if you're down near the water in a wet environment, is look for footprints. The very typical heart-shape footprint that's split down the middle. They're hooved animals and its split down so it looks like a heart broken in half, and there's a pointed end and a rounded end. The pointed end is pointing in the direction of travel.

**JAY CONTINUES:** So that's by far the easiest way to locate them. You can also look for scat, when they go to the bathroom, and it looks pelletized. Normally dark brown to black in color, a little smaller than a marble; and it can be single, it can be clumped.

When they start eating on the plants, they tear. They have teeth on the bottom but not teeth on the top. So when they bite through something, it's a tearing factor. If it's a cut, very defined, almost like scissors, if it's low enough to the ground, that's going to be a rabbit.

When they bed down, it's going to be an oval-shaped impression. And they do try to come to similar places each night.

**JAY CONTINUES:** And depending on time of year, that can be high on a ridge where they're going to get a crosswind, or it can be low down in a valley or a draw where they're going to be protected from the wind in the winter time. But yeah, they're going to mat down the vegetation for sure, and you're going to see that.

And one other thing to look for in late winter is the shedding of antlers, of the males that grow antlers every year. And then sometime in January to February, they do drop them. So people could be lucky enough to find a shed antler out there. And sometimes they're found one right next to the other; sometimes they lose one and it could be weeks for they lose the other half.

[End of Stop]



# White-tailed Deer

## Threats to Deer

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** The grounds at Crystal Bridges are suitable for the white tail deer for a lot of reasons. White tail deer are very easily adapted to most urban and rural environments, very populated all over Arkansas and all over the United States. The lush grounds and immediate supply to water make it very suitable for the white tail deer.

Threats to white tail deer on the grounds of Crystal Bridges would simply be competition and just being frightened by human interaction. They are very used to humans, especially in the urban interface areas, but there is going to be some conflict with pets, with humans and just with noise in general.

**JAY CONTINUES:** Deer aren't attracted to sounds. They're going to be frightened away, so the threats is going to be interaction.

[End of Stop]

# White-tailed Deer

## Lone Fawns

**JAY SCHNEIDER:** If you find a fawn on the ground, that's actually a good thing. Fawns when they're born have no smell. So the mother will teach the fawn to lay very still. That's why they have spots when they're young to help them to camouflage, in the shade. So they have those white spots mimicking sunlight coming through the forest canopy. And they are taught and instinctively know to lay very still. If they are disturbed, you'll notice they'll jump up and they'll cry out once and then they'll run. The mother's nearby. Mother has a smell that's going to attract predators. They don't want to be near the baby unless they're feeding. So it's not a danger to the fawn to be by itself. It's actually for its own protection.

**JAY CONTINUES:** And if that fawn is disturbing and makes that one loud cry, the mother will come and find it and help protect it.

That's actually a very good defense. Should we bother them? No. We should leave them alone. And a lot of people think that they've been abandoned by mom and that they need our help. They actually don't. That's their survival strategy and that's worked for thousands of years. The best thing to do is slowly move away from the situation, and if you can avoid eye contact, all the better. Mama deer is going to stomp her foot, going to snort loudly, may charge for a few steps at you if you're extremely close, and that's probably the most anyone's ever going to see. If you're touching the baby or somewhere near the baby, you're going to have a possible physical encounter, which none of us want.

**JAY CONTINUES:** But we want to see the animals survive and thrive. And the best way to do that is to observe them from afar.

[End of Stop]