Okay, Hi everybody! Thanks for tuning in for yet another Wildlife Center Classroom Series class – today we’re going to talk about wildlife myths – and the truth behind them!

So just what is a myth? Well, a myth is defined as “a widely held but false belief or idea.”

We definitely hear a lot of wildlife myths in our line of work – some are quite funny, some are outrageous, some are a little more understandable … some might even be half true! But in all cases, we really want to dispel these myths so that everyone learns and understands wildlife better!
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Can anyone name a familiar wildlife myth?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Feel free to participate, rehab students in the library ... :)

Comment From BarbG
parents won’t accept baby bird back if people touch it

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥️•ᴥ•️ ♥️
a common myth is Myth: Baby birds cannot be returned to their nest once you have touched them.

Comment From CAL
toads give you warts.

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Adult birds won’t come back if babies are handled by humans.

Comment From Carol in Oregon
You get warts from frogs.

Comment From Lynda in AZ
mother birds won’t take back babies because they smell people.

Comment From izzy
If you touch a baby bird the parents will no longer care for it

Comment From Pat, NJ
That a mother animal will reject offspring if a human has touched it.

Comment From Mary E in NC
Don’t touch baby animals or their moms will reject them - myth?

Comment From 33mama
Owls are wise!

Comment From Barb in SD
If you pick up a baby bird and put it back in the nest, the parents will abandon it because they can smell the human smell.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Ooh, all good!

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥️•ᴥ•️ ♥️
another Myth: Cats who only play with their prey are not doing much harm.

Comment From VA Kris
That true about owls, I think.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
We’ll talk about some of those today! I have a “top 10” list.
And to kick us off, here is a funny video about some animal myths:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=F9-iSl_eg5U

Did you catch all that? I recommend watching it a few times. It’s funny.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
It’s really a pretty amazing thing when you think about how these myths got started, and how they became to be beliefs so widely held.

It seems like, in many cases, the myth in question was created when someone offered an explanation for something that they didn’t fully understand – or something happened, and someone misinterpreted what was going on.

You know, back in the day ...

Recipe for Mice

Property of www.education-portal.com
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
I think we all know now that flies don’t come from rotting meat, and rags + grain isn’t a recipe for mice! But, for a long time, people believed that!

Comment From Stephen in NC
My dad taught me the binary taxonomy of penguins: There are two types. The black ones run away from you. The white ones run toward you.

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
When I was a kid, I heard if a snapping turtle bites you, it won’t let go until it thunders.

Comment From Lynda in AZ
And that is how we have all those wonderful Greek, Egyptian, etc myths of gods and goddesses.

Comment From Lydia, PA ❤️❤️❤️
Used to use that information about frogs when teaching adaption to change, but I never knew the frogs brains were cut out first!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Isn’t it crazy, the things we hear -- and the stories that are repeated over and over?

Comment From Lynda in AZ
I heard of a Native American one where if a coyote crosses you path going west, someone will die (west is the direction of death.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
These made-up stories are passed along and repeated so often that people start to think that they’re true. So, sometimes, after these “myths” are disproved, they still live on for awhile because they’re so ingrained in people’s heads and storytelling circles.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
In some cases, these myths are referenced in cartoons – which continue to perpetuate the myth! It’s very hard to “unlearn” something when you’ve been seeing something or thinking of something in a certain way since you were a very little kid! I think the cartoons contribute significantly to the perpetuation of myths.
Amanda Nicholson, WCV

We’ve all probably seen countless cartoons and comics about ostriches, right? And now they have the “ostrich pillow” – all of that just reinforces this myth!

Comment From izzy
Hehe Amanda you’ve found some great visuals today!
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
(This was a super fun class to put together)

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
I think it’s interesting that some of these myths turned into “idioms” too – and then it becomes really, REALLY hard to dispel the myth! Anyone know what I’m talking about?

Comment From MH in SC
yes

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Burying your head in the sand

Comment From 33mama
Blind as a bat?

Comment From Mary E in NC
Blind as a bat?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
I think idioms are fun to think of – one of our former veterinary fellows had a husband from Ecuador – and once he started pointing out how often we use idioms, it became a fun game to become aware of just how often we used them.

Comment From 33mama
Mad as a hornet!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Idioms are really are bizarre turns of phrases when you think about them – the meaning of the expression is often quite hard to figure out from the words in it.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
An example: It’s raining cats and dogs! Most of you should know what I mean by that – it’s raining really hard – but when you think about the actual phrase, it’s hard to figure out why that would mean it’s raining heavily.

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Very difficult for second language learners to figure out sometimes.

Comment From Mary E in NC
lol - this is hilarious!

Comment From Lynda in AZ
I use idioms alot teaching (since my students have to learn to identify and interpret them)

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Some wildlife idioms that are clearly based in myth: “a snake in the grass” (someone who is trying to deceive you and wants to do you harm); “blind as a bat”; “be as quiet as a mouse” (I dunno ... I’ve heard some loud mice at times!).

Comment From izzy
Sly as a fox

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
And then of course, some are true -- or at least based in reality! I think 'sly as a fox' is pretty good -- they are pretty crafty!
Wild animals might like some of our idioms.

Comment From izzy
LOL!

Comment From 33mama
lol

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥şýşş♥
"Hungry as a bear" is true though...LOL

Comment From Cathy - DE
Bear Hug!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Okay, so let's get down to it – let's talk about some common wildlife myths (yes, ones that people DO believe!) and we'll talk about why they're not true – and why they started in the first place.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Hopefully I won't go too long -- I had a hard to stopping myself! But, 10 myths!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Shall we start with the obvious one – one we talk about a lot.
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Myth #1: If you touch a baby bird, its mother will abandon it.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
False! Most birds have a very poorly developed sense of smell – so they can’t smell any weird scent on their babies, no matter how bad you smell!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Like that video says – a mother bird is no more likely to reject her baby because you touched it, than you would reject your baby if a bird touched it.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So what’s really going on? We’ve definitely had people tell us, “no, really! After I put this baby bird back in the nest – its mother (or father) pushed it out again!”

Comment From rehabexterns@wcv
Because it's cold!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Oooh, bonus points for the rehab externs!

Comment From Lynda in AZ
Remember to warm the baby up if it feels cold! I remember that from my rehabbers class with Raina!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Right!
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
In those cases, what’s most likely happening is that the baby bird, who has spend time outside of the nest for any period of time, is cold.

And if a cold baby bird is put back in the nest ... it appears to be sickly, and will endanger the other babies. So, better to lose the sick one than the whole brood – mom/dad will boot out the sickly one.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So that can explain one reason why this myth got started ... but why else?

Comment From Pat, NJ
Maybe if the parents sensed a problem with the baby.

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Time to fledge?

Comment From Lynda in AZ
Mothers didn't want their children to touch the 'dirty bird'?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Exactly, Lynda!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Several people postulate that this is something mothers told their kids to get them to STOP bothering baby birds. Probably out of concern for the kids picking up germs/diseases, and one way to deter them from touching the birds is to scare the kids into thinking that the mom won’t come back to her baby!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
A few weeks ago, I was at a birthday party, and someone found a baby bird on the ground! The kids were instantly all around it, while the adults were busily looking for nearby nests (we were a Wildlife Center crew) ... and my seven-year-old friend started to say, “Don’t touch it! The mother won’t come ...” And then she sort of trailed off.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Now, she’s a Wildlife Center kid, so she didn’t hear that at home – but she can’t remember where exactly she heard it (school, other relatives, friends, etc). It is just kind of amazing though how those myths can seep in there!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So, touching a baby bird – or any baby wild animal for that matter – is okay when you’re trying to get it help! We’ve experienced and heard of many successful reuniting stories over the years – and some of those are after the bird has spent days in captivity!
Comment From izzy
Dr. Dave.. and one cute baby G'ho!

Comment From Pat, NJ
Dr. Dave?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Yes, that’s a photo from an owl reuniting that we did several years ago (in his terrible beard-less phase)

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
I’ve heard some really wonderful stories from Anne Miller, former executive director of the Alabama Wildlife Center – she’s done a ton of reuniting and fostering with raptors.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
There are situations where she and her team have cared for an injured raptor for days/weeks before returning it to the nest (when there is another baby that keeps the parents there and active) – and reuniting that baby is just fine!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So … hopefully that underscores that a little weird human scent can’t keep the parents away, because after days/weeks in a hospital, that baby must smell all kinds of weird!

Comment From izzy
Do birds carry any diseases that could be harmful is there any truth at all to that part?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Yes -- all wild animals can carry various zoonotic diseases (ones that can be shared between humans and animals) -- so it's always best to wear gloves, or wash your hands well after touching a wild animal, or cleaning up after one!
Okay, another myth!

Myth #2: Owls are wise.

Sorry, Athena!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=j8N2SftkPmQ

I love that commercial!

Well, they do LOOK wise!

Maybe not wise but certainly beautiful!!

Probably those big eyes—kind of all seeing!

Right!
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So yes, I know that in our culture, we have this very strong “wise old owl” perception.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Maybe that’s because owls have very large eyes (they see all, therefore must be wise) ... and of course, this myth is also heavily based in Greek mythology – the owl is associated with Athena, the goddess of wisdom.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
But, the idea that owls are wise isn’t any truer than the old folklore that owls are harbingers of death and bad omen! And it is interesting that this is definitely a cultural perception – in India, owls are thought of as rather dumb, because of their blank expressions. The Hindi word for owl actually refers to a foolish person.

Comment From izzy
As Ed would say not the brightest bulb on the avian Christmas tree lol

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
There is some truth to that ...

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
In reality, they are not overly bright when you look at them on the bird-smarts spectrum. Studies have shown that brain size does matter when determining avian intelligence – and owls have fairly small brains (relatively speaking) because so much room in their heads is taken up by their eyes!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
In reality, corvids (crows, ravens, jays) are MUCH smarter – and even hawks are more adept at learning tricks than owls are.

Comment From jctct
better to see you with!

Comment From Mary E in NC
What a "hoot"

Comment From Karen in Orlando
Who..???? heheheheh :) :)

Comment From Deb in SD
Just got here--love this commercial--her "eye roll" is the best!

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥️♥️♥️
On the other hand, crows are very intelligent

Comment From Pat, NJ
Well, each parent knows their job in the raising, so I'd say they are pretty smart if not wise.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Well, but you could say that about many, many species of wild animals! They all know their role so that they can reproduce!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So while owls are QUITE good at hunting – which is really what counts in their world! – they aren't particularly wise.
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Sorry guys. We still love you.

Comment From Lynda in AZ
There is also the encephalization quotient for dinosaurs - carnivores had larger brains than the herbivores.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
How about a mammal myth?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Myth #3: Opossums hang from their tails while they sleep.
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
We’ve seen this all the time, so it must be true, right?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Wrong!

Comment From izzy
They don’t?

Comment From VA Kris
Ha Ha...I’ve never heard that

Comment From Deb in SD
I have never seen an opossum hang upside down

Comment From Lynda in AZ
I wouldn’t think sleeping like that would be a good idea - too exposed to predators

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Opossums do have prehensile tails, and may use their tails to grasp onto something or help support themselves while climbing, but the adults are MUCH too heavy to just hang from their tails! Young opossums can do it for a few seconds, but not very long.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
How did this get started? Most likely from seeing a young opossum hanging by its tail briefly – and someone assumed all opossums can do that for great lengths of time.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
I remember being pretty good at hanging from the monkey bars when I was a kid (still doesn’t mean it was my natural state of relaxing) – but I definitely couldn’t do that nearly as well now!

Comment From Pat, NJ
Never heard of that one.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
This is one that is just rampant in cartoons for kids ...

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
This is definitely one that has been picked up by cartoons and books and other media though – which definitely perpetuates the myth. Anyone ever heard of this book?
Or seen this cartoon?

Merrie Melodies
Comment From izzy
I've seen that cartoon for sure

Comment From jct
no

Comment From rehabexterns@wcv
Too old for us

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Oh, those young kids in the library ...

Comment From Pat, NJ
Can't remember that far back.....

Comment From Carol in Oregon
I've seen cartoons

Comment From Doris
Nope!

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Always thought they were kind of heavy for that.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Well good -- then you guys are already wise to that myth!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
And while we're talking about opossums, how about the idea that opossums will play dead to avoid danger?
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
This one is partially true – this is a real defense mechanism that they have!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Opossums will “play ‘possum” and will appear dead or very ill to dissuade would-be predators. But, the myth part of this is when people think opossums do this by choice – as if the opossum says, “This is not working – I will play dead now!”

Amanda Nicholson, WCV

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Love the cartoon

Comment From izzy
Giggles

Comment From Deb in SD
I do know they will play dead--I have seen it and even have a picture of one doing it.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Their reaction is actually a genetically programmed reflex reaction – not a “choice” that they make. They can be in that comatose state for hours!

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Very interesting. I thought they chose to play dead.

Comment From izzy
Wouldn't that be a bad adaptation to have, as it leaves them open to predators?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Well, it’s meant to dissuade predators -- particularly those interested in a fresh kill.
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
The Ice Age part 2 -- the oppossums hang in the tree--all the kids watching that movie get the wrong idea there.

Onward! Let's see ... how about another mammal myth? Where's Congo?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Myth #4: Squirrels remember where they bury their nuts.

Not really! Research has shown that while they know the general area, they can't remember the location of each individual nut.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV

Comment From Deb in SD
The Ice Age part 2 -- the oppossums hang in the tree--all the kids watching that movie get the wrong idea there.

Comment From David in VA.
Definitely not true..

Comment From Carol in Oregon
No they don't. I have peanuts all over my backyard and some even sprout.

Comment From 33mama
They just dig everywhere until they find one!

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
Probably why they bury so many

So just how do they find those buried nuts? By smell!

Comment From Caandice VaBch
I always wondered ow they found them
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Squirrels can smell nuts even when they are buried under several inches of snow! And of course, many nuts are not found – and that’s how new trees are planted, since some acorns need to be buried to germinate. One study estimates that 95% of wild hickory trees are planted by squirrels.

Comment From Lois - Bath, NY
I knew that wasn’t true, have too many saplings coming up in the grass.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Squirrels actually have a pretty cool relationship with nuts/trees – apparently, squirrels are known to eat white oak acorns (which sprout soon after falling) pretty much right away, while they bury red oak acorns – which need to spend the winter underground to sprout in the spring.

Comment From izzy
Wow didn't realize squirrels did so much for the environment even if they aren't meaning to. Perhaps Congo will like them more now :D

Comment From David in VA.
Don't count on that Izzy.. LOL

Comment From Linda in Suffolk, VA
I had to pull up two pecan trees that were growing in my flower beds. I am pretty sure they didn't walk across the street from my neighbor's tree and bury themselves in my front yard.

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Facinating that they know the difference in the acorns.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
While I don't think it qualifies as a myth, I think there is a very strong connotation between squirrels and acorns – kind of an oversimplified association between the two.
Amanda Nicholson, WCV

Comment From Doris
CUTE!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Squirrels definitely do eat a lot of acorns and other nuts – but remember, they are omnivores that also eat seeds, fruits, bird eggs, baby birds, and even frogs!

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥ياة ♥
They also eat plenty of flower bulbs

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Speaking of those strong food stereotypes ... can anyone think of another significant food stereotype?
Comment From rehabexterns@wcv
Bears and honey!

Comment From Guest
Deer?

Comment From Pat, NJ
stumped.

Comment From FLGranny
Bears and Honey

Comment From Mary E in NC
Vultures only eat carrion?

Comment From izzy
That feral cats only eat intended prey like "mice" and never harm other creatures

Comment From Carol in Oregon
bears and honey

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Hmm, some good talking points there, but ... I was going with ...

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
Hmm, rabbits eat only carrots? carrots are very high in sugar and not good for them

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Bingo!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Myth #5: Rabbits love carrots (and mice love cheese)!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
This one is pretty fascinating to me, because it speaks volumes to how really strong myths are created ... and passed on! Any ideas where the idea that “rabbits love carrots” comes from?

Comment From izzy
Bugs Bunny

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
Buggs Bunny artoons

Comment From Guest
bugs bunny cartoons

Comment From Guest
bugs bunny

Comment From jtct
Comment From Doris
Bugs Bunny

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Bugs Bunny

Comment From Linda in Suffolk, VA
Bugs Bunny

Comment From Lydia, PA 💖omics 💖
What's up doc?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
You got it.

Comment From Doris
Was that just to get kids to eat their veggies?

Comment From MH in SC
Elmer Fudd?

Comment From Mary E in NC
Peter Rabbit?

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Externs are probably too young to know Bugs bunny
Comment From 33mama
Peter Rabbit?

Comment From jtct
daffy duck?

Comment From David in VA.
The cartoonist liked carrots?

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥️❤️️??❤️️
Captain Kanagaroo

Comment From izzy
Rabbits were seen in farmers fields and they assumed they were going after the carrots?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Good guesses, but ...

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Well, apparently, that idea came from this guy!

Comment From MH in SC
From Clark Gable?

Comment From Pat, NJ
Good old Clark Gable

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Externs are REALLY too young for this guy

Comment From Me
Seriously?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
The Bugs Bunny reference was a cultural nod at a Clark Gable scene, where he is chewing on a carrot, in the film “It Happened One Night”. That became Bugs Bunny’s “thing” then – always thinking about carrots! The rest is history ... it’s a deeply ingrained myth that rabbits just LOVE carrots!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
While some rabbits might eat them, they’re actually NOT very good for rabbits.

Comment From wren of NVA
I've seen a rabbit eat a whole row of carrot tops in a garden! (well after the fact)

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Carrots are root vegetables, and not really a natural food source for rabbits – wild rabbits would much rather eat carrot TOPS (the greens!) rather than the carrots themselves.

Comment From Pat, NJ
But they LIKE them right?

Comment From Lynda in AZ
Carrots are 'junk food' for rabbits?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Yep, you got it -- junk food!

Comment From Lynda in AZ
My mom used to tell me to eat my carrots so my eyes wouldn’t go bad (and need glasses). She said "Have you ever seen a rabbit with glasses? See?"

Comment From jtct
But.....have you ever seen a rabbit wearing glasses?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Carrots can cause digestive problems and tooth decay in pet rabbits – so this is a really a myth that has caused a lot of problems! Pretty much all the rabbit websites have some sort of warning about “don’t feed your rabbit nothing but carrots, or it will die.”

Comment From izzy
Wow never realized even wildlife had to watch what they ate... junk food wise

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Well, that only is an issue with wild animals in captivity -- we they don't really have a choice of what to eat!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
As you guys know, we recommend NOT feeding a wild animal in need of help, but some people can’t resist putting a few snacks in with the animal when they are bringing it to us.
We’ve received many, many rabbits that have little baby carrots in with them – fortunately, the wild rabbits don’t even know what to do with this weird food next to them!

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥ cinco ♡
The rabbits in our yard are eating the leaves of my canna lilies.

Comment From APK in FL
The bunnies in NY sampled every head of lettuce in our garden, but didn’t touch the carroys.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
And what about the “mice love cheese” idea?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
While mice might eat some cheeses, this actually isn’t their first pick of food items. They’re much more drawn to sugary foods. So why the cheese stereotype?

Comment From izzy
Always put on traps in cartoons.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Yep!

Comment From Pat, NJ
Okay now, blow that one out of the park....

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥ cinco ♡
Mice will eat whatever they can get. I do know they love peanut butter

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So, there doesn’t seem to be any definitive truth on how this got started, but one theory is that in the Middle Ages, cheese was the food to which the mice had the most access.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Meats were cured and hung, many times flour and grains were stored in jars ... but cheese had a long shelf-life, and mice had easy access.

Comment From Lois - Bath, NY
peanut butter works better

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Yep ... sugary!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So yes, while mice will eat cheese if they must (better than starving!) they much prefer sugary foods ... which just weren’t around back then! Now they can take their pick of Cheetos and donuts and cookies and all the junk that we like to eat ... but the myth lives on!

Comment From VA Kris
Snickers candy bars...

Comment From Linda in Suffolk, VA
My Dad used to bait mouse traps with pieces of a snickers candy bar.

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Don’t think so but they will go for pecans

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Isn’t it funny that most traps look like this though?
Stereotypes are so persistent!

Comment From Doris
When I was little my dad told me Swiss cheese had holes in it because mice ate it!

Okay, onward!

Myth #6: If you see a raccoon (or a fox or a skunk) out during the day, it has rabies!

Comment From jtct
NOPE

Comment From izzy
False

How many times have you heard that one? Or maybe even thought it? Raccoons, foxes, and skunks are all nocturnal animals – so sometimes it can be surprising when they are seen during the day. Sometimes people think that means something is wrong – but that’s not necessarily the case!
Comment From Pat, NJ
No, not necessarily since they are nocturnal.

Comment From MH in SC
No way..unless it’s acting bizarre and un-natural

Comment From Doris
I’ve heard that one all my life!

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Saw a sick one on my deck during the day DNR said he probably had distemper not rabies

Comment From izzy
The two patient foxes proved that were they ever active!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
It’s not all that uncommon to see these animals out during the day – there are several reasons why you might see a nocturnal animal out during the day.

One simple reason – their sleeping has been disturbed by something – just like you might wake up at night and go look out the window if you hear a bunch of noise outside your house.

Comment From Caandice VaBch
Saw one in the eagle pen the other day

Comment From Lois - Bath, NY
they are foraging for food

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Or, maybe they are hungry – didn’t get quite enough food when they were out foraging at night. I think there are humans who can relate to this too – anyone get up for a midnight snack? Sure! Doesn’t mean you have rabies!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Also, there is a significant reason why you might see a raccoon, or skunk, or fox out during the day in the spring and summer time ... any ideas?
Comment From Lydia, PA ♥σ•°σ°•σ°♥
Nope--healthy racoons are also active during the day, esp when feeding their young.

Comment From Linda in Suffolk, VA
During baby season the mom can be out looking for food.

Comment From izzy
Babies?

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
Not true. Could be a Mom looking for food for babies

Comment From David in VA.
To feed their young?

Comment From wren of NVA
Food for young.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Yep, that animal might have kids! Just like human parents who don’t get any sleep anymore ... nocturnal animal parents can have some rough days too — where they need to get up and get more food for the family.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV

I am a lot of work.

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
Cute!

Comment From jtct
AWWWWW
Now, given that some of the nocturnal animals (and these three in particular) are high-risk rabies species, this myth likely got started because someone DID encounter a rabid raccoon out during the day.

It is important to always observe the animal in question for abnormal signs – difficulty walking, a stumbling gait, neurological signs, etc. Exercise caution, but just seeing an animal out in the day doesn’t mean it is rabid.

Right. Snacking at night doesn’t mean you’re rabid either. :)

Probably -- because it probably has an effect on the food (prey) activity level too!

Okay, next myth …

Myth #7: Bats will fly into your hair.

Has anyone heard this one?

Yup

Yes!

Heard it

False they are going after mosquitoes around you not your hair :_

YES
Well ... it's false!

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥lığı♥
They may look like they are--but grabbing at insects hovering over you maybe

Comment From Caandice VaBch
yes

Comment From VA Kris
Ha I think that came from an Andy Griffith episode.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Last October, Chapin did a Wildlife Center Classroom Series class on bats – and for a portion of the class, she talked about echolocation. I won't get in to all the details right now, since you can go back and read that (http://wildlifecenter.org/s...), but the basic principle of echolocation is illustrated by this photo:

Amanda Nicholson, WCV

[Image of echolocation photo]

Courtesy of http://askabiologist.asu.edu

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
The bat produces a high-pitch sound through their mouth or nose, the sound moves through space and then hits an object. The sound bounces off the object and produces an echo.

Comment From Pat, NJ
YES. They "could" but not intentionally.

Comment From Lynda in AZ
I always tell my students that if a bat can snag a mosquito out of the air in the dark, how in the world would they manage to bump into you?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Exactly!
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Now, that high-speed information exchange tells the bat a lot – not only where the object is, but how big it is and in what direction it’s moving. That’s a good bit of information! That means they know whether they are near a moth, a mosquito, a tree, a human, etc!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
And of course, it happens so quickly – the bat processes all of that info unconsciously, the same way we would process visual or audio information.

Comment From VA Kris
Bats are so cool.

Comment From Barbb
Amazing

Comment From Lynda in AZ
Talk about myths ingrained in culture. The Navajo word for bat is ja’abani which actually translates to 'cover your ears'.

Comment From jtct
Was at a 4th picnic last weekend. It started to get dark and 2 bats came out. everyone ran for cover, but not me or my husband. they are fascinating!

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
Went to a cousin’s baby shower as a kid at the local fire station meeting room and had bats fly around. Ladies were hiding under the tables.

Comment From izzy
I’m going to be honest because of that myth, before Chapin’s class I was terrified of bats!

Comment From CarolinaGirl
They will swoop over you head though.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So, with all that in mind – why on earth would a bat fly into a human’s hair? No self-respecting bat would just fly right toward a giant predator and entangle itself – and their method of navigation is certainly sophisticated enough to avoid that. So what’s all that about?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Well, if you’re outside on a warm summer evening ... think about what’s hanging out right around you.

Comment From jtct
bugs!

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
bugs?

Comment From MH in SC
G-nats and skeeters

Amanda Nicholson, WCV
Comment From 33mama
Bugs and mosquitos!

Comment From Doris
Maybe bats were going after mosquitos in the beehive hairdos years ago!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Insects! Yes, I think we all know that feeling – spend some time outside, and the mosquitos want to join you! You’re kind of like this moving food station – the bats aren’t interested in YOU but they are definitely interested in your “groupies”!
Bats swoop down to grab the mosquitos -- so actually they’re doing us a giant favor!

Comment From jtct
thank you bats!

Comment From Lynda in AZ
Doesn’t a little brown bat eat something like 6,000 mosquitos a night?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Right! Excellent mosquito control.

Comment From izzy
Nature's bug repellent :D

Comment From Deb in SD
And my parents said the bats go for blondes more that others-- I was blonde --I think they were scaring me into staying in at night! lol

Comment From Me
Had a bat smack into my sliding glass door at midnight. Radar must have been off.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
And, side note – bats also process visual information – most of them do have fairly acute vision. So that other myth and saying – “bats are blind”: false! (Remember that part of the video too ... they look at you ... with their eyes!) Echolocation
isn’t a replacement for using their vision – they use echolocation in conjunction with their vision.

Comment From Pat, NJ
Yeah for the bats.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Let’s see … how about a bear myth?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Myth#8: One of the most dangerous encounters is getting between a mother black bear and her cubs.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
We certainly wouldn’t advocate bothering a bear and her cubs (well, bothering any bear for that matter), but the reason why this is a myth is because bear moms will often “tree” their cubs, it is rare for them to injure a person in that situation.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Now, we all know that Black Bear cubs are GREAT at climbing, right?

Comment From jtct
right

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Right

Comment From izzy
Bear cubs are outstanding climbers!

Comment From Doris
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
I think the Critter Cams, and the admission stories of many of our cub patients illustrate that cubs can often be found in trees. That’s their “safe place”!

Comment From Lois - Bath, NY
Think it’s the first thing they learn when they leave the den

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
A very important lesson!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
When mom bear senses danger or feels a little nervous, she just sends her kids up a tree. Then, depending on what’s going on, the sow will either try to lead the danger away from the area, or she’ll stick close by until the threat goes away.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So, if you see a sow and her cubs in the wild, just give them some space, be quiet, and retreat slowly.

Comment From Doris
Don’t climb a tree if you’re trying to get away from a bear LOL

Comment From Pat, NJ
I would say that if that were to happen, you better say your prayers.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Because black bears can tree their cubs, it is rare for them to injure a person in that situation.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: That is from Jaime herself!

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Good point, Doris.

Comment From BarbG
LOL Doris

Comment From Mary E in NC
Do all bears climb trees (if they have them)?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: All Black Bears can and do!

Comment From 33mama
I was ujst thinking about the cubbie who escaped and ran right up a tree! Remember you posted a student in a chair at the base of the tree to wait for him to come down?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: Okay ... I’m running over ... next myth!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: I am greatly amused by these next few myths.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: Myth #9abcdef: Snakes clearly have it in for us ...

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: There are so many crazy (and kind of amusing, until you realize people actually believe them) myths about snakes. I’m lumping them all in this one section, since they are pretty quickly debunked!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: A. Ratsnakes and copperheads will breed to make stealthy venomous snakes that look like ratsnakes.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: Anyone ever heard of that one? Not true! These snakes are in different families and only distantly related ... so ... breeding not going to happen.

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Good grief!!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: This probably got started because juvenile ratsnakes look so different from the adults – and have a pattern that sort of-kind of looks like the pattern of a copperhead.
Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
have not heard that one

Comment From David in VA.
Whew, I thought that one was true

Comment From izzy
LOL oh deer a super snake!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
B. Ratsnakes are “pilot snakes” and guide copperheads and rattlesnakes to safety.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Um, no. Possibly this got started because ratsnakes will share winter den sites with species of other snakes, including copperheads … but the idea that copperheads and rattlesnakes need a “big brother” ratsnake to guide them is just silly!

Comment From Doris
Never heard that one either..

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
C. Snakes can charm/hypnotize birds and children.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
No.
Comment From izzy
Heard that one and its in cartoons a lot!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV

Maybe because snakes don’t blink?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
I don’t know. When it comes to snake myths, I think people just start saying anything.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
D. Mother snakes will swallow their young to protect them.

Comment From julia phx az
oh my ewww

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Mercy, who makes these things up??

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
No. No parental care is provided at all (with the exception of one species of snake in Africa). No “mother snakes” to worry about!

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
probably comes from some snakes birthing live young
Amanda Nicholson, WCV: Could be!

Comment From Pat, NJ
old wives tales.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: E. Milksnakes will suck the milk from cows and goats.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: No. Just ... no.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: Snakes are carnivores. They’re found around cows and goats in barns because ... there are mice there!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV

Milk? Yuck.

Comment From Deb in SD
You are right, Amanda, these are some crazy myths about snakes!

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Yikes.

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Guess I have led a sheltered life. Never heard of these!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: well, that’s a good thing!
F. I’m being chased by a nest of cottonmouths!

No … there are people that swear up and down that this has happened to them (or, more likely, “my great uncle had this happen to him!”), but this is a myth. And really, I combined two in one here – the “nest” idea, and the “chase” idea.

There is no social structure of snakes – they don’t nest together like a pack of wolves or a bunch of vampires. And, they bear live young – so no “nests” of eggs to protect. If there are lots of copperheads in an area, it’s probably because it’s a really good environment, and there is a particularly reliable food source at the moment.

Snakes want to get away, just like other wild things!

Right!

As for the chase …

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=314N7xleRR8

LOL!! longest chase sequence ever..

Too funny!

I saw that episode LMBO

We won’t watch the whole thing, since it’s long, but I recommend doing so when you have time -- it’s really funny!

The melodramatic opening is quite funny.

So, the chase thing is one that snake people battle time and time again.

Most likely this got started because someone startled a copperhead – and the copperhead tried to flee.
But, if the path of least resistance is just past you ... it might look like a copperhead is chasing you. But the snake has no interest in pursuing a HUGE predator that it can’t eat – remember, a venomous snake without venom doesn’t eat. Simple as that. They really don’t want to waste their venom on you.

Comment From Kathe - Cincinnati
So, basically everything my mom ever told me is a lie...I bet eating my crust won't make me be able to whistle, washing the dishes isn't good for my hands, and I am not going to catch my death if I don't wear a hat! I'm going to have to have a long talk with my mom!!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Uh oh ...

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Okay, last one!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Myth #10: Touching a toad will give you warts.

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
no!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV

Comment From Pat, NJ
No, its caused by a virus.
Comment From Doris
Nope!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Toads have lumps and bumps on them – and I guess some sort of look like warts. But, warts are caused by a virus, not toads and frogs!

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Nope. Their "warts" are not transferable!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Toads get a bad rap – many people think they are gross, and this is a prevalent theme in literature – Shakespeare insulted toads several times in his literature: “… which, like the toad, ugly and venomous … “ (As You Like It).

William, that is NOT very nice. [It’s also not an appropriate use of the word venomous]

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Toads aren’t venomous, but they do secrete a poison from their paratoidal glands. This is a defensive mechanism that makes them unpalatable to would-be predators.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
I can confirm it works well – I had a toad that lived around a pond in my backyard, and occasionally one of my dogs would pick it up – and would quickly spit it back out!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV

Angry.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
So, because of this secretion, it is advisable to wash your hands after handling a toad – but not because you’ll get warts!

Comment From Deb in SD
I played with toads all the time when I was growing up. They are cute to me.

Comment From rose
If your dog plays with one he will NOT like the taste

Comment From Doris
Very cute!

Comment From Lynda in AZ
venomous - inject; poisonous - ‘lick’.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Right! (that was my biggest beef with the first video I played ... improper use of poisonous)

Comment From Lynda in AZ
I’d be mad too if you flipped me over on a deck and took my picture!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
The dog did that -- that’s where she spit him out. He was puffed up and mad.

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
That’s some dog slobber around him.

Comment From izzy
We see a lot of toads here and I have moved them to safer spots (washed hands of course) but are there any spaces they don't like? Is it a myth they don't like water?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
They like moist environments, but don’t live IN the water like frogs do.

Comment From Elizabeth @ WCV
that is a fabulous picture, angriest frog ever!!

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥ʕ•ᴥ•ʔ ♥
shoot--work is calling. I have to scroll back later to finish this! Great class AA!!!

Comment From Lydia, PA ♥ʕ•ᴥ•ʔ ♥
By the way, I did homework. I used to think moles actually did damage the yard. Then I learned this: Myth: Moles destroy lawns. Fact: Mole holes may be unsightly, but lawns can actually benefit from mole activity. Moles provide insect control by feeding on underground larvae which can cause other forms of damage to the lawn. Tunneling also aerates the soil and can improve lawn health over time. Also, the mole holes make a natural putting range!

Comment From wren of NVA
If I have a nightmare tonight can I call the Amanda hotline?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Nightmares?? No nightmares!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
Well, that concludes class – thanks for tuning in, and sorry for going over!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV:
There are many, many wildlife myths out there – and I hope the lesson learned is not to just believe everything you hear! Let’s all be myth-busters together! Use common sense, and good field guides, and keep learning.

Comment From Doris
Great class as usual AA!!

Comment From Gwen in CA
Great class Amanda. Thanks.

Comment From Deb in SD
Fun and informative class, Amanda! Thanks!!

Comment From BarbG
wonderful informative class-thanks so much

Comment From Pat, NJ
A HUGH thank you Amanda for the time and effort you put into this presentation. They just keep getting better and better.

Comment From David in VA.
No worries about going over. It was fun and informative. Thank you Amanda.

Comment From Linda in Suffolk, VA
As always, GREAT class, Amanda! Thanks so much!!

Comment From jct
Thanks Amanda-I learned A LOT today! And thanks to WCV!!!!

Comment From Lois - Bath, NY
Thanks for a great class

Comment From Peggy from Pungo (VA Beach)
Thanks, Amanda.

Comment From caleb (¬) 
WOW Amanda! You held our kids SPELLBOUND! What a wonderful informative class! Thanks so MUCH!!!

Comment From Guest
Thank you Amanda. I learned a great deal.

Comment From izzy
Thanks for a wonderful class Amanda I'm so glad I could join in for this one! You are always a wealth of knowledge :)

Comment From CarolinaGirl
Going over is fine. Once again....great class! Thanks Amanda!

Comment From Mary E in NC
Thanks, Amanda, for a great class!

Comment From Elizabeth @ WCV
Thank you so much Amanda, wonderful class, I know you put a lot of work and time into it, and I greatly appreciate it, learned a lot!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: 
It was great fun! Now -- your homework is to go and be a mythbuster! :)

Comment From Carol in Oregon
Thank you Amanda.

Comment From Mandi, PA
I think it would be good to post one mythbuster at a time on Facebook so we can share it!

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: 
Hmm, good idea!

Comment From Lynda in AZ
Great class, Amanda! Do you want to come to my class and teach it to 4th graders?

Amanda Nicholson, WCV: 
That would be SO FUN!

Comment From Caandice VaBch
Great class as usual. I learn so much every time. Thanks Amanda