Erin Caldwell  
Composition 1  
Mrs. Downey  
3/6/16  
MP 3: Opossums

SGS 1: Appearance

* “The opossum has many interesting features. It has 50 teeth, more than any North American land mammal. Its hairless tail is prehensile and is used for grasping branches, balancing and carrying nesting material. The opossum does not hang upside down by the tail, a common misconception. The opossum also has opposable thumbs on its hind feet for holding onto branches (“General Information”).
* The opossum is the only marsupial in North America (“General Information”).
* Opossums are really good at climbing trees because they have sharp claws and prehensile tails that help them grip branches (“Opossum”).
* When being attacked, Opossums often roll over on their sides and pretend to be dead by letting their tongue loll out and their eyes close or look straight ahead (“Opossum”).
* Opossums are the least intelligent American terrier quarry. Weighing between 3-8 pounds, “the brain case of the animal is so small that the skull has a prominent bone ridge whose sole purpose is to give the possum a large enough cranial surface area for the jaw muscles to attach to” (“Opossum: Life & Habit”).

MP3: Opossums

SGS 2: Diet

* “Opossums are omnivorous, eating a wide variety of foods but preferring animal matter -- grasshoppers, crickets, frogs and toads, small snakes, baby mice, and road-kill. Other main food crops include blackberries, pokeberries, wild grapes, and persimmons” (“Opossum: Life & Habits”).
* The National Opossum Society did a study of what wild opossums killed on the road had in their stomachs: it was 27% mammal; 11% leaf litter; 10% fruits, seeds, bulbs, etc.; 10% gastropod; 9% garbage; 9% earthworm; 9% pet food; 8% grass & green leaves; 3% insects; 3% birds; and 1% misc. animal tissue (“Diet”).
* The diets of opossums change with the seasons and are very diverse. If a diverse diet is not maintained, opossums may get sick, become immobile or even die (“Diet”).
* Opossums can eat snakes because they are immune to all types of snake venom except coral snake venom (“Sharing Our Cities”).
* Opossums are always looking for food because they don’t store food and they have very little body fat (“Sharing Our Cities”).

MP 3: Opossums

SGS 3: Habitat