

[From Winter 2001]

## **Who Am I?**

"Are we going to see any animals?" This familiar question is often asked by school children visiting the refuge. And by animals, they mean something big such as deer, a fox or raccoon, or maybe a snake or a turtle. For some reason, small creatures like insects and spiders don't usually get credit for being "real" animals. However, in response, I sometimes answer their question with a question of my own, "what do you think you'll see?" At that, a host of animal's names bombard me including everything from dinosaurs to tigers. To get the children thinking along the lines of living, local animals, I sometimes give them clues and let them try to figure out the animal's identity. Most of the students are sharp and figure out the mystery animal's identity after two or three clues. How well would you do? Let's find out!

Here are clues to a few of the common animals that live here on the refuge. How many clues do you need to guess the mystery animal's identity?

### **Mystery Animal #1**

1. I have a keen sense of smell to find my food.
2. I don't have a voice and can only hiss and grunt.
3. I eat carrion.
4. I fly high in the sky with wings held in a "V."
5. I'm black and gray with a bold red head.

### **Mystery Animal #2**

1. I have six legs and wings.
2. Green and brown are my colors.
3. I eat insects, spiders and sometimes my own kind.
4. The females of my species lay a foamy egg mass containing thousands of eggs.
5. I have my two front legs folded in front of me as if in prayer.

### **Mystery Animal #3**

1. I have four legs and fur.
2. I am an omnivore eating berries and fruit as well as birds, rodents, and rabbits.
3. I live in open fields and forests almost everywhere.
4. My bushy tail has a white tip.

5. I have reddish-brown fur and black legs.

**Mystery Animal #4**

1. I can either be a blotchy mixture of colors from brown to tan to orange or solid gray to black.

2. I feed almost exclusively on toads.

3. I have no legs, and scales cover my body.

4. I'm harmless, but will try to scare off any trouble by inflating my body and hissing.

5. If my scare tactics don't work, I roll over and play dead.

How well did you do? Read "Answers to Who Am I" to find out.

Many other animals, big and small, inhabit the refuge and leave clues to their presence here. Take a walk on our trails to discover for yourselves the endless variety of other mystery animals to be found.

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