

[From Winter 2001]

Who Am I? Answers

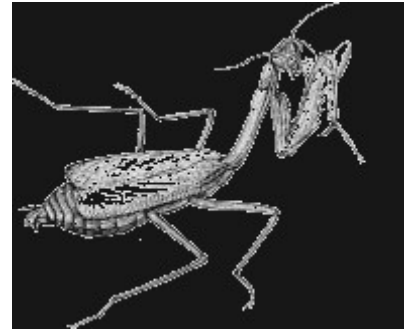
Mystery Animal #1 - Turkey Vulture

Turkey vultures are often seen soaring over the refuge, their large gray and black silhouettes ride on the rising thermal air currents. In the late fall, large numbers of birds may be seen spiraling overhead or roosting on structures on the ground. A large black bird with a naked red head, turkey vultures are scavengers that feed on carrion. They locate their non-moving food with a keen sense of smell and sharp vision, and their naked head keeps them from getting overly messy when probing into carcasses. Turkey vultures lack a syrinx, or voice box, so all they can do is hiss and grunt.



Mystery Animal #2 - Praying Mantis

Lurking in the vegetation along all the trails of the refuge is an efficient and deadly predator. The praying mantis camouflaged with brown and green to resemble its surroundings, waits quietly, front legs folded into a "praying" position. When an unsuspecting insect wanders in range the mantis strikes out for the capture. Spines on the front legs impale the prey, holding it firmly in place while being eaten. The spines fit into a groove on the lower parts of the leg when not in use. Females, after mating, lay eggs in groups of 12-400, in a foamy liquid that hardens into a protective shell. In spring, the young mantises emerge, often dining on siblings for the first meal.



Mystery Animal #3 - Red Fox

Scat and fur remnants from a recent cleaning may be found along the trails giving clues to the presence of this small dog-like animal. The red fox prefers the borders of forests with open land for hunting nearby. They travel well-worn paths through their territory on their nocturnal hunting forays. If one is fortunate, a red fox may be seen at dusk or dawn patrolling in search of a tasty morsel. Foxes are omnivorous, eating both small mammals and plant material such as berries and other fruits. The large bushy tail with a white tip is used for balance when hunting and helps to keep the animal warm when it's sleeping.



Mystery Animal #4 - Hog-nosed Snake

A master of the bluff, the Hog-nosed Snake uses several tactics to befuddle would-be predators. When first approached, this harmless and docile snake with the upturned nose will rear up and hiss, inflating itself to look



bigger and meaner. If that doesn't scare off the predator, the Hog-nose goes on to its next defense, rolling over with its tongue hanging out and playing dead. Two color combinations exist, one with blotches of orange, brown, gray, tan, red and yellow, and the other a solid gray to black. This species is active during the day and feeds almost exclusively on toads. |