



CRITTER CORNER: THE EASTERN CHIPMUNK

Often seen running across a road with its tail stretched straight up in the air, the Eastern Chipmunk is fairly common throughout its range, which includes most of the eastern half of the United States (hence, its name). Chipmunks are **diurnal** - active in the daytime - and solitary, rather than social, animals. They nest in burrows, and spend most of their time on the ground, although they are capable of climbing trees. The Eastern Chipmunk bears two litters per year. The first litter is born in May and the second litter is born in August or September. A litter may include as few as two, or as many as eight, baby chipmunks. A close relative of squirrels and groundhogs, the Eastern Chipmunk is a rodent. As with all rodents, the four front teeth, the **incisors**, never stop growing. This feature allows the chipmunk to take advantage of food sources, such as nuts and seeds, that are too hard for most other animal species. The Eastern Chipmunk is essentially an **herbivore**, which means "plant-eater", however, it will include insects and birds' eggs in its diet when possible. Because it hibernates for much of the winter, autumn is a busy time for the Eastern Chipmunk. To prepare for hibernation, a chipmunk must store enough food in its burrow to last through the harsh winter months. This is when a chipmunk's cheekpouches come in handy - one little chipmunk can carry up to eight acorns in its mouth at one time! Spunky and industrious, the Eastern Chipmunk is truly a remarkable "critter."

Should you happen upon a chipmunk in distress, the first, and most important, order of business is to **BE CAREFUL!** Although small in stature, chipmunks have a powerful bite (remember those nut-cracking incisors)! *Ask an adult to assist you* in capturing the chipmunk. Keep in mind that if you are unable to catch an animal, it probably does not need your help. Using a towel to cover its head is a good idea - an animal that can not see you is far less likely to bite you. Once caught, gently transfer the chipmunk to a box or other container padded with tissues, a cloth, or other soft bedding. Make sure it has enough air to breathe, and is warm and dry. *Immediately*, bring the chipmunk to Second Chance Wildlife Center. Unfortunately, many people, for one reason or another, wait too long to drop off an animal. There is nothing that we at Second Chance can do for an animal that is dehydrated or starved beyond the point of rehabilitation. Finally, give yourself a pat on the back for helping an animal get a second chance.

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