

Why Opossum Has a Bare Tail

A Creek/Muscogee myth retold by S. E. Schlosser

(http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/09/why_opossum_has_a_bare_tail.html)

One day, Opossum was walking in the woods around sunset when he spied Raccoon. Now Opossum had always admired Raccoon because he had a beautiful tail with rings all around it.

So Opossum went up to Raccoon and said: "How did you get those pretty rings on your tail?"

Raccoon stroked his fluffy long tail fondly and said: "Well, I wrapped bark around the tail here and here and here," he pointed. "Then I stuck my tail into the fire. The fur between the strips of bark turned black and the places underneath the bark remained white, just as you see!"

Opossum thanked the Raccoon and hurried away to gather some bark. He wrapped the bark around his furry tail, built a big bonfire, and stuck his tail into the flames. Only the bonfire was too hot and too fierce. It instantly burned all of the hair off the Opossum's tail, leaving it entirely bare.

Opossum wailed and moaned when he saw his poor tail, but there was nothing he could do but wait for the fur to grow back. Opossum waited and waited and waited. But the tail was too badly burnt by the fire and the fur did not grow back. Opossum's tail remained bare for the rest of his life.

Opossum tails have been bare ever since.