

= The Possum =

" The Possum " is the 18th episode of the second season of the American comedy television series Parks and Recreation , and the 24th overall episode of the series . It originally aired on NBC in the United States on March 11 , 2010 . In the episode , Leslie forms a task force to capture an possum that bit the mayor 's dog , but she begins to fear she has caught the wrong animal .

The episode was written by Mike Scully and directed by Tristram Shapeero . " The Possum " featured a guest appearance by Alison Becker , who reprised her previous guest role as reporter Shauna Malwae @-@ Tweep . Supporting character Ron Swanson is revealed to have a large woodshop in " The Possum " , which was inspired by actor Nick Offerman 's real @-@ life carpentry skills .

According to Nielsen Media Research , " The Possum " was seen by 4 @.@ 6 million viewers . Its rating among viewers between ages 18 and 49 constituted a nine percent drop from the previous week 's episode , " Woman of the Year " . " The Possum " received generally positive reviews .

= = Plot = =

After the infamous possum " Fairway Frank " bites Mayor Gunderson 's dog at a golf course , mayoral representative Evelyn ( Judith Moreland ) asks Leslie ( Amy Poehler ) to form a task force to capture it . Leslie , Tom ( Aziz Ansari ) , Andy ( Chris Pratt ) and two incompetent animal control workers , Harris ( Harris Wittels ) and Brett ( Colton Dunn ) go to the golf course and quickly find the animal . The animal control workers are useless and Tom immediately runs away , but Andy dives toward the animal and captures it . Evelyn is impressed with Leslie and promises her a special favor from the mayor 's office . However , Leslie sees a second opossum and fears they have captured the wrong animal . She later finds out that the mayor doesn 't care about catching Fairway Frank , but rather about securing a trophy animal for his bathroom .

Back at the department office , reporter Shauna Malwae @-@ Tweep ( Alison Becker ) interviews Andy for a newspaper article . After he brags about the capture , the reporter suggests his heroics might win him back the affections of Ann ( Rashida Jones ) , his ex @-@ girlfriend , much to Andy 's excitement . April ( Aubrey Plaza ) , who has romantic feelings for Andy , overhears this and leaves jealously . Evelyn demands delivery of Fairway Frank . Leslie responds that there is uncertainty about the identity of Fairway Frank . She refuses to hand over the captured opossum and creates a ketchup @-@ blood diversion so that April can escape with the caged animal .

Leslie and April take the opossum to Ann 's home , where April has been paid \$ 50 to housesit . April lets the opossum out of its cage , and it causes havoc and minor damage . While hiding from the animal , April reveals her feelings about Andy to Leslie for the first time . When Leslie refuses to hand over the opossum , Evelyn angrily takes back her promise of a favor from the mayor 's office . Andy , still oblivious to the reasons behind April 's jealousy , delivers coffee to April , as well as the day 's newspaper , containing a story which credits April for providing moral support to Andy . It is later revealed that Leslie has donated the opossum to the Pawnee zoo .

Meanwhile , Ron ( Nick Offerman ) plans a woodshop expansion in his home and seeks the approval of city planner Mark ( Paul Schneider ) . Mark informs Ron that an inspection is needed to ensure that the facility meets all current zoning code standards , and an obviously lying Ron claims it does , clearly underscoring his vexation with governmental regulations . During the inspection , Mark finds numerous code violations , including oily rags placed above a wood @-@ burning fireplace and a long @-@ outdated fire extinguisher . Later , Mark takes a half @-@ day off so that he can help his friend 's woodshop meet city code . Ron thanks Mark by building a wooden canoe and leaving it in his office .

= = Production = =

" The Possum " was written by Mike Scully and directed by Tristram Shapeero . Despite the title , the animal featured in the episode is an opossum , a marsupial species native to the Americas

which is commonly called a possum , though that name refers to animals native to the Eastern Hemisphere . Some commentators said the main plotline involving the opossum served as an allegory for capital punishment . The episode featured actress and comedian Alison Becker in a guest appearance as Pawnee Journal reporter Shauna Malwae @-@ Tweep . The actress and character first appeared in the first season episode " The Reporter " , in which she had sex with Mark , which Andy bluntly recollects upon first seeing Shauna in " The Possum " . Rashida Jones appears only in the opening and closing scenes of " The Possum " because she was filming scenes for David Fincher 's film The Social Network .

In " The Possum " , Ron is revealed to have a very large woodshop . This element of Ron 's character was inspired by actor Nick Offerman , who in addition to comedy runs an independent carpentry business called Offerman Woodshop . This was also referenced in the previous second season episode " Sweetums " , in which Ron builds a harp from scratch to prove to Leslie he is not intoxicated . During one scene , Leslie shows a list of the Pawnee Parks Department 's Most Wanted Pests , which includes several raccoons . This is a reference to a running gag , established from the series , that Pawnee has a terrible raccoon infestation problem . Shortly after " The Possum " originally aired , a downloadable PDF file was made available on NBC 's " City of Pawnee " website of the most wanted pests list , which included images of the 10 most animals including raccoons , the opossum , a bat , a feral cat and a crow . The site also included a PDF file of the front page of the fictional newspaper 's The Pawnee Journal , which included the newspaper article referenced in the episode about Andy 's capture of the opossum . A printed copy of the newspaper article can be seen taped to the wall of Andy 's shoeshine stand in the subsequent episode , " Park Safety " .

= = Cultural references = =

While visiting a golf course , Tom said he used to love golf pro Tiger Woods , until his extramarital affairs scandal was revealed , and then he considered him a god . One of the raccoons featured on a list of Pawnee 's Most Wanted Pests List was named Zorro , a reference to the sword @-@ wielding title character of several books , films and television programs . Another pest is named " Jangle Bo Jangles " , a reference to the pop song " Mr. Bojangles " .

= = Reception = =

In its original American NBC broadcast on March 11 , 2010 , " The Possum " was seen by 4 @.@ 6 million viewers , according to Nielsen Media Research . Although it was the same amount of viewers as last week 's episode , " Woman of the Year " , " The Possum " had a 2 @.@ 1 rating / 6 share among viewers between ages 18 and 49 , a nine percent drop from the previous episode . In the 9 p.m. timeslot on March 11 , Parks and Recreation was outperformed by American Idol on Fox , which drew 20 @.@ 46 million viewers , and Survivor : Heroes vs. Villains on CBS , which drew 12 @.@ 17 million viewers . " The Possum " outperformed a repeat of Grey 's Anatomy on ABC , which drew 4 @.@ 5 million viewers , and The Vampire Diaries on The CW , which drew 1 @.@ 37 million viewers .

The episode received generally positive reviews . Alan Sepinwall , television columnist with The Star @-@ Ledger , said the episode featured strong physical comedy , political satire , romantic tension and character moments . He said he " loved virtually every beat of the possum story " and finds the developing Andy and April relationship funny and believable . Entertainment Weekly writer Sandra Gonzalez said " The Possum " was a very funny episode , and particularly praised the development of the Andy and April relationship . She said Plaza and Pratt did some of their best work to date in the episode .

Matt Fowler of IGN praised the April and Andy relationship and the subplot with Ron and Mark , although he claimed Ron was the funnier of the duo and Mark 's character is too normal and boring for the show . Fowler also liked the way Leslie 's political ambition conflicted with her conscience in the episode . New York magazine writer Steve Kandell praised the main plotline with Leslie and the

performances by Pratt and Offerman , particularly praising the jokes surrounding Ron 's woodworking hobby . Kandell pointed out the episode did not suffer from Ann 's absence and suggested although Rashida Jones is charming , the show does not need her . Leonard Pierce of The A.V. Club said the episode 's main story was " a bit of a trifle " and the subplots were lacking , but that " The Possum " included several laughs and demonstrated Ron and Leslie 's opposing attitudes about local government .

= = DVD release = =

" The Possum " , along with the other 23 second season episodes of Parks and Recreation , was released on a four @-@ disc DVD set in the United States on November 30 , 2010 . The DVD included deleted scenes for each episode .