

Assessing wildlife issues

Wild animals have basic needs for food, water and shelter. Take a look at your yard from an animal's point of view. You can modify the guest list by adjusting what your yard has to offer in the way of basic habitat needs. You also may be able to relocate wildlife to a different part of your yard by providing for their needs in an area where they won't cause problems.

Assess the problem carefully. Don't overestimate or underestimate the problem. For example, woodpeckers often drum simply to establish their territory, and will stop short of creating a hole in your house. Damage from insects, on the other hand, can go unnoticed for years.

Ask yourself, is there really a problem? Is the situation serious and is it going to reoccur? Is this the right time to deal with it, or are there nests or baby animals involved?

Make sure you identify the right animal, bird or insect that is involved. If you see gnawed wood, you might assume a squirrel was at fault when the damage was actually caused by a rat. This is important because methods of dealing with rats and squirrels differ.

If immediate action is warranted, explore the options. Many devices are available to exclude, repel or scare wildlife away from your property. Get as much information as you can about the animal's life cycle and about solutions for your problem. See the resource section of this pamphlet.

Sometimes tolerance or adjusting expectations is the most practical route to take. For example, you may decide it is not a good use of your time to try to maintain an absolutely perfect lawn next to a forest that provides a constant supply of shade or burrowing animals. Consider naturescaping a portion of your yard.

Try to find a non-lethal solution to the problem. Live trapping and relocation seems harmless but often results in the death of the animal as it cannot successfully compete in a new territory that is often already occupied by competing wildlife. It also is usually ineffective because other animals will quickly replace the animal that is removed. It is important to remember that many native animals are protected by state and federal law and cannot be relocated without a permit.

Living with wildlife

Strategies and advice to help you live peacefully with wildlife near your home



Metro Regional Services
Creating livable communities



Metro Regional Services
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600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232

On wildlife feeding and care

With the exception of songbirds, it is best not to put out food for wildlife.

Feeding can attract wildlife that you would rather not attract. It can disrupt natural feeding and population patterns and cause animals to become tame around people. Many foods people commonly feed to animals, such as peanuts, are actually bad for them and can cause health problems. Bread is harmful to most animals, including birds, squirrels, ducks, geese and deer. If you do feed birds or squirrels, use whole, natural foods such as seeds, filberts, apples, squash or corn.

Consider adding a water feature to your backyard for birds and other wildlife to enjoy.

If you find an injured wild animal, the best rule of thumb is to keep it quiet and warm in a dark cardboard box. Take it to the Audubon Wildlife Care Center, 5151 NW Cornell Rd., (503) 292-0304.

Do not assume a fledgling bird or baby mammal needs your assistance.

Many birds, especially ground feeders such as robins or jays, normally fledge on the ground in the spring in the care of their parents. As long as the parent birds are alive, it is best not to disturb baby birds. Young mammals often wander short distances from their parents. If you leave them alone, the parent will usually retrieve them.

Tips for living with common visitors

Raccoons

- To avoid attracting raccoons, keep pet food inside and make sure your garbage lid is secure.
- Deepen your fish pond to three feet or cover it with a screen to keep raccoons from harming pet fish.
- A battery-operated radio tuned to a talk radio program and left overnight is a quick and humane way to get a raccoon to move her young to a more appropriate site.

Raccoons and squirrels

- Block outside entryways to basements, attics and under porches BEFORE an animal decides to take up residence.
- If you have big snags in your yard, leave them to provide alternate denning and nesting sites. You can also provide squirrels with alternate nest boxes in your yard.
- Consider whether bird feeders are squirrel resistant before you purchase one.

Coyotes

Coyotes prey on small rodents and pose virtually no risk to people. They are medium-sized members of the dog family, weighing just 25 to 35 pounds. Contact can be minimized by feeding and housing pets indoors, and teaching children not to approach wild animals.

Skunks

To drive out a skunk from beneath the foundation of your house, try putting mothballs in a stocking under the house.

Bats

- Bats control insects and are important pollinators. Many people build bat houses to attract them.
- If a bat gets in your house, there is no need to panic. Bats rarely pose any health threat to people. Turn off the lights, open the doors and windows and shoo the bat toward an exit.
- If bats live in your attic and you are sure you don't want them there, wait for the bats to leave in the evening and then seal the entrances before they return. Do this in the late fall, after the young have learned to fly and many bats have migrated.

Deer and rabbits

- Fence your garden.
- Protect young plants with netting.
- Try using a sprinkler with a motion sensor to startle wildlife with a blast of water as they enter your garden.
- Garlic or human hair in nylon stockings can repel rabbits and deer from plants.

Woodpeckers

If a woodpecker is drumming on a metal chimney or gutter, cover the drumming area with reflective Mylar tape, burlap, canvas, foam rubber or heavy plastic during the bird's mating season. You can also provide an alternate drumming site by nailing two boards together at just one end (to produce resonance) and then hanging on a secure site.

Beavers

Protect tree trunks from beaver with metal flashing, wire mesh or hardware cloth. Or paint the tree trunk with a solution of 1 tablespoon of hot pepper sauce in 1 gallon of water. Repeat after heavy rains.

Songbirds

- Make your cat an indoor cat to protect both the cat and songbirds. By one estimate, cats kill more than a billion songbirds each year in this country. Outdoor cats are subject to injury from cars, traps, poisons, parasites, diseases, human cruelty and predators such as dogs, raccoons, foxes and coyotes.
- If you have a window that songbirds tend to hit, try taping a paper hawk silhouette to the outside of the window.
- Mylar tape or colorful streamers taped to the outside of a window can be an effective short-term deterrent during breeding season when male birds are particularly likely to charge their own reflection in a window.

Resources

General information, wildlife rescue or complaints

- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), (503) 657-2000
- To make your backyard more wildlife friendly, contact Naturescaping for Clean Rivers at (503) 797-1842.

Sick or injured animals, wildlife information hotline, literature

- Audubon Society of Portland Wildlife Care Center, (503) 292-0304

Literature on coexisting with wildlife, injured wildlife, wildlife disease, wildlife law and non-native species.

Domestic, exotic and other animals

- Oregon Humane Society, (503) 285-7772
- Multnomah County Animal Control, (503) 248-3066
- Clackamas County Dog Control, (503) 655-8210
- Washington County Dog Control, (503) 681-7041
- Clark County Animal Control, (360) 699-2488
- Avian Medical Center (donation required), (503) 635-5672

Excellent books

- Wild Neighbors; The Humane Approach to Living With Wildlife by the Humane Society of the United States

This authoritative work has detailed information on tools and tactics for dealing with wildlife problems, including fences, one-way doors, tree protectors, scare

devices, acoustical alarms, sprinklers, ultrasonic devices and chemical repellents, to name just a few. It covers health concerns in dealing with wildlife, and give abundant information on individual species, from black bears to woodpeckers.

- Living with Wildlife: A Guide to Peacefully Co-existing with the Wildlife in Your Community. A publication of the Chintimini Wildlife Rehabilitation Center.

Metro resources

- Metro GreenScene lists nature tours, classes and events where you can learn more about wildlife in their native habitats. Call (503) 797-1850, option 3 for a free copy.
- To learn about the open spaces acquisition program, call (503) 797-1919.
- For other questions about urban wildlife habitat, call Metro's Regional Parks and Greenspaces Department at (503) 797-1850.
- Metro Recycling Information, (503) 234-3000, provides information on free natural gardening and composting workshops and answers questions about recycling, disposal and household hazardous waste. The Metro Recycling Information Center also operates a lending library of trade journals, books, videos and other environmental and recycling publications. Lending library hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- Oregon Zoo Animal Management Division, (503) 220-5766, can answer various questions about wildlife and exotic animals.

Metro – planning that protects the nature of our region

It's better to plan for growth than ignore it. Planning is Metro's top job. Metro provides a regional forum where cities, counties and citizens can resolve issues related to growth – things such as protecting streams and open spaces, transportation and land-use choices and increasing the region's recycling efforts. Open spaces, salmon runs and forests don't stop at city limits or county lines. Planning ahead for a healthy environment and stable economy supports livable communities now and protects the nature of our region for the future.

Metro serves 1.3 million people who live in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties and the 24 cities in the Portland metropolitan area. Metro provides transportation and land-use planning services and oversees regional garbage disposal and recycling and waste reduction programs.

Metro manages regional parks and greenspaces and the Oregon Zoo. It also oversees operation of the Oregon Convention Center, Civic Stadium, the Portland Center for the Performing Arts and the Portland Metropolitan Exposition (Expo) Center, all managed by the Metropolitan Exposition-Recreation Commission.

For more information about Metro or to schedule a speaker for a community group, call (503) 797-1510 (public affairs) or (503) 797-1540 (council).

Metro's web site: www.metro-region.org

Metro is governed by an executive officer, elected regionwide, and a seven-member council elected by districts. An auditor, also elected regionwide, reviews Metro's operations.

Executive Officer – Mike Burton; Auditor – Alexis Dow, CPA; Metro Council – Presiding Officer Rod Monroe, District 6; Deputy Presiding Officer Susan McLain, District 4; Rod Park, District 1; Bill Atherton, District 2; Jon Kvistad, District 3; Ed Washington, District 5; David Bragdon, District 7.

Illustrations by Evelyn Hicks and Barbara McComber

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