
Encountering Wildlife

Wild animals add to our enjoyment of nature and outdoor activities, but they can also cause damage to homes, plants, and pets. Sometimes they can even threaten the health and safety of humans. This pamphlet contains tips for homeowners on how to reduce the chances of encountering problems with wildlife.

Many wild animals are attracted to areas that provide easy access to food, water, and shelter. Reducing or getting rid of these items will help keep these animals from moving in or will encourage them to leave. Food should never be left out for wild animals.

Pets should be fed during daylight hours and leftovers should be promptly removed. Pet food should be stored in animal-proof containers. Water bowls should be emptied and brought in at night. Pet doors also need to be kept locked at night in order to discourage unwanted guests. Cats and small dogs should not be left out after dark unless enclosed in an animal-proof area. In addition, gardens should be harvested often, fallen fruit picked up daily, ripe fruits and vegetables should be covered at night and/or the garden/fruit trees enclosed by an animal-proof fence to prevent access, and tight fitting lids should be kept on all garbage cans.

SQUIRRELS

To keep squirrels from becoming a part of your home and yard you can:

- 1) place screens over louvers, vents, and fan openings
- 2) make sure that doors and windows securely close
- 3) tighten eaves
- 4) replace rotten boards
- 5) cap chimneys
- 6) trim overhanging trees
- 7) remove bird feeders and
- 8) remove acorns and other nuts from your yard.



RABBITS

Rabbits can be kept out of your garden and away from plants and small trees by using repellents and/or by placing a 2-foot fence around the area. You will need to bury the fence at least 6 inches beneath the surface of the ground.

SNAKES

You would be most likely to encounter a rattlesnake in the open during the warmest hours of a spring day and during the cooler hours (morning and evening) of a summer day. There are two reasons why rattlesnakes come into urban/suburban areas: food and shelter. Therefore, you should get rid of the food attraction by keeping your yard free of places where mice or rats might nest, such as piles of grass cuttings, wood, or trash. You should also plug all ground openings, such as gopher holes, use only covered trash containers, and control insects. To get rid of the shelter attraction make sure there are several inches of ground clearance under shrubs, avoid tall ground coverings, and remove snake hiding places such as large rocks or rubbish. If your property



backs onto a canyon or other uninhabited area, you should clear a bare strip from 20-100 feet, cut back shrubs and small trees, and think the area enough to let sunshine filter through. You may also want to construct a snake-proof fence made of heavy galvanized screen, 36 inches wide with 1/4-inches of mesh. Bury the lower edge a few inches in the ground and slant the fence outward at a 30-degree angle from top to bottom. The ground outside the fence should be kept clear of tall vegetation, which makes easy ladders for snakes. The best way to keep snakes out of your house is to seal cracks and openings around doors, windows, water pipes, attics, and foundations.

If you see a rattlesnake on your property, call Animal Care & Control at 1-800-472-5609. If a rattlesnake bites someone, take a victim to a hospital as quickly as possible or call the Sheriff or Fire Department for help transporting the victim. When dealing with rattlesnakes try to stay calm, call for assistance, and keep in mind that rattlesnake venom usually progresses slowly enough to allow ample time for successful medical treatment.

OPOSSUMS, SKUNKS, & RACCOONS

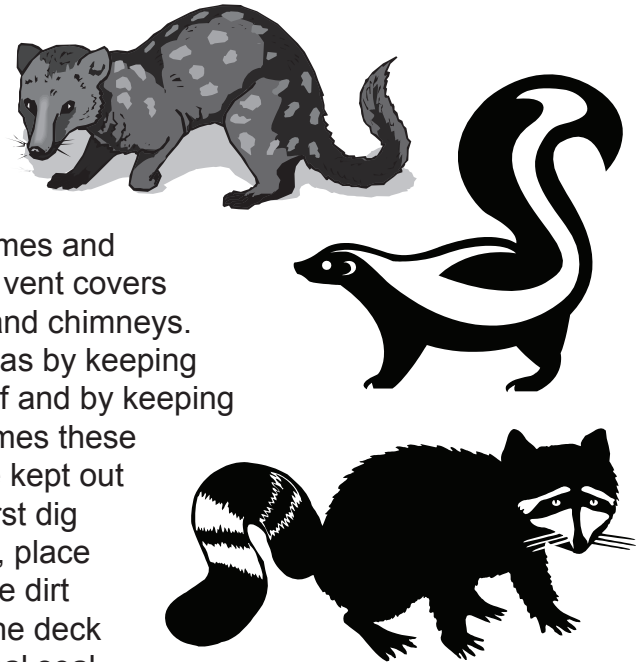
Keeping them out of Homes and Buildings

Opossums, skunks, and raccoons, can be kept out of homes and buildings by covering foundation vents with slotted metal vent covers and using 1/4 inch grid screening to cover the attic vents and chimneys. Opossums and raccoons can be kept away from roof areas by keeping tree branches trimmed at least 10 feet away from the roof and by keeping climbing plants trimmed away from eaves areas. Sometimes these animals take up residence under low decks. They can be kept out by using 1/4 inch grid screening or solid metal flashing. First dig around the perimeter of the deck at least 12 inches deep, place the screening in the ditch, and then fill in the ditch with the dirt you removed. Attach the top of the screening façade to the deck with nails or fence post staples. Before completing the final seal on the last entry point, make sure there are no animals trapped inside.

On the night before you finish the seal, sprinkle some flour in the entrance hole and check for tracks the following morning. If there are no tracks for three nights in a row, then there probably are no animals present. You may want to make a temporary one-way exit using 1/4-inch grid screening. Shape the screen into a cone or funnel shape. The large end should be big enough to fit around the entry hole and be attached to the façade of the deck or building with nails or fence post staples. The small end should face away from the building and be 4-6 inches in diameter so that opossums, skunks, and/or raccoons can squeeze out of the hole but not re-enter.

Keeping them out of coops and poultry yards

Keeping skunks and raccoons out of coops and poultry yards is the best method to prevent losses. Ideally poultry should be confined day and night in a sturdy house combined with a skunk/raccoon-proof outdoor run area. Keep in mind that raccoons are strong animals capable of seizing and pushing or pulling objects with great force. They are also good climbers. Skunks, on the other hand, are good diggers who try to gain entry by digging under fences. Most skunks and raccoons are not inclined to break through walls or fences that are intact and in reasonably good shape. They tend to gain entrance through open, weak or loose places in fences or buildings.



Preventing Lawn and Turf Damage

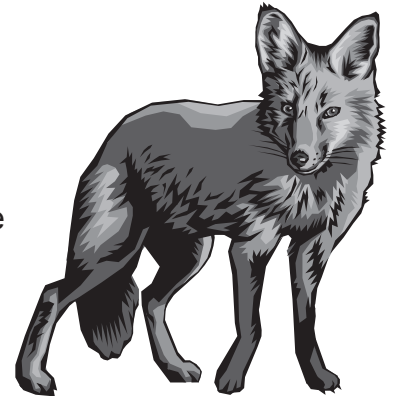
Skunks and raccoons causing lawn and turf damage may be encouraged to leave by controlling the grub worms or other subsoil insects that these animals eat. Chemicals to control these insects may be obtained at hardware or garden supply stores. Remember the safety of your pets when using any type of lawn chemicals.

Trapping

In urban areas, live trapping of opossums, skunks, and raccoons with a baited cage is the best method of control. Open grid cage traps can be used, but they should be covered with heavy cardboard or ¼ inch plywood to reduce the chances that the person picking up the trap will be sprayed with skunk musk. The trap should be placed in the areas of greatest activity or near a suspected entry point. Do not place traps under a building or deck. Almost any type of food can be used as bait to trap these animals. For opossums and raccoons it is best to use fruit, berries, vegetables, raw egg, or peanut butter rather than neat in order to decrease your chances of trapping neighborhood cats. Placing a wadded up piece of aluminum foil in the trap may also help trigger a raccoon's curiosity. Preferred baits for trapping skunks include raw whole egg, peanut butter, sardines, raw chicken parts, or pet food.

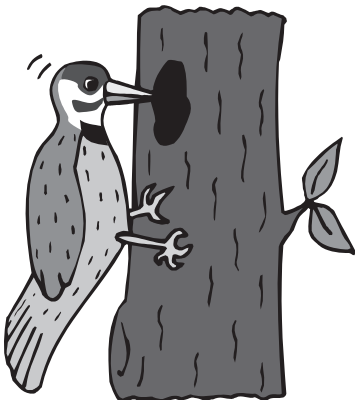
COYOTES

The best way to keep coyotes away from your home and yard is to fence them out. Coyote-proof fences should be at least 5 ½ feet tall. They can be made of solid wood, cement blocks, brick or wire. If net wire fencing is used, the bottom portion should be at least 3 ½ feet tall with squares smaller than 6 inches. If high tensile fence is used, it should be electrified with a fence charger to prevent coyotes from going through. All fences should have some sort of galvanized wire apron buried at least 4-6 inches in the ground, which extends out from the fence at least 15-20 inches. The apron should be securely attached to the bottom of the fence. Coyotes are very good diggers and they prefer to dig under fences rather than jump over them. Brush and vegetation should be cleared from backyards and nearby areas and landscaping should be pruned on a regular basis. This will remove the hiding cover often used by coyotes to stalk pets. If cats cannot be kept indoors then posts can be installed in open space areas to provide an escape for the cats. These posts should be at least 7 feet tall and have enough space on top for the cat to sit.



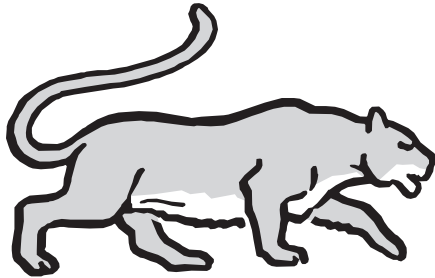
WOODPECKERS

Woodpeckers can damage homes and buildings by drilling holes into wooden siding, eaves, or trim boards. If the pecking creates a large enough hole, the bird may use it for nesting. Effective methods of excluding woodpeckers include placing lightweight mesh nylon or plastic netting on the wooden siding beneath the eaves, covering pecked areas with metal sheathing, and using visual propellants like balloons.



DEER

Deer enjoy feeding on row crops, vegetables, fruit trees, nursery stock, stacked hay, plants, and trees. You can discourage deer from entering your yard by removing food sources and by using scare devices and/or repellents. The only sure way to prevent deer damage is to fence the deer out. A wire mesh fence is effective if it is solidly constructed and at least eight feet high. Electric fencing may also help reduce damage.



MOUNTAIN LIONS

Mountain lions are often attracted to areas that provide easy access to prey, such as pets and other animals. To prevent the taking of pets or livestock by mountain lions, a heavy woven wire fence at least 10 feet high is needed. Overhead fencing is needed for complete protection. Removal of brush and trees within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of homes, buildings, or livestock/pet enclosures may help reduce attacks because mountain lions prefer to hunt and stay where escape cover is readily available. Bright lights, strobe lights, loud music, barking dogs, and moveable scarecrows may help repel mountain lions. To decrease the attractiveness of your property to mountain lions, everything should be done to discourage prey animals, especially deer, from living on your property or nearby. This includes landscaping with plants not attractive to deer, removing dense or low-lying vegetation that could hide a mountain lion, and not feeding wildlife to attract them.

If you go hiking do not hike alone. Instead go in groups and make sure that all children are supervised by adults at all times – mountain lions seem especially drawn to children. If you do encounter a mountain lion do not approach it. Most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Make sure you give them a way to escape. Do not run from a mountain lion. Running away may trigger a mountain lion's instinct to chase. Instead, stand and face the animal. Make eye contact. If you have small children with you, pick them up so they don't panic and run. Although it may be awkward, pick them up without bending over or turning away from the mountain lion. Do not crouch down or bend over. A person squatting, crouching, or bending over looks a lot like a four-legged prey animal – remain standing. Do all you can to appear larger than the mountain lion. Raise your arms and open your jacket if you are wearing one. Try throwing stones, branches, or whatever you can reach without crouching or turning your back – it may help chase the animal away. Wave your arm slowly and speak firmly in a loud voice. The idea is to convince the mountain lion that you are not prey and that you may be a danger to it.

BATS

Bats prefer to avoid human contact, but they have been known to set up roosts in attics and deserted buildings. You can prevent/get rid of attic and building roosts by closing off any entry and exit holes (after the bats have left of course) using items such as $\frac{1}{4}$ inch hardware cloth, caulking, or wire mesh. If a bat does make its way into your house, you can persuade it to leave after dark by turning on lights and opening windows and doors.



BEARS

Bears are known for destroying cornfields and trees, getting into garbage cans, ruining the inside of cabins and campers, and killing livestock. Bears have also been known to attack humans. Prevention is the best method for controlling bear damage. Heavy woven and electric fencing may help keep bears from attacking livestock and damaging property. Loud music, barking dogs, fireworks, gunfire, nightlights, and scarecrows will often provide relief. The best way to protect pets and livestock is to keep them inside in an enclosed kennel or sheltered area. Using guard dogs, removing garbage, and placing crops far away from timber and brush may also reduce bear damages.



If you have questions or need more information, please contact that San Bernardino County Animal Care & Control Program toll free at 1-800-472-5609.



NOTE: The information contained in this pamphlet is to be used only for educational purposes. The information has been adapted from the Department of Fish & Game's Living with Wildlife on line at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/coned/living.html> and Los Angeles County's Animal Control website at <http://animalcontrol.co.la.ca.us/html/pages/wildlife>.