

## ***A MESSAGE FROM GROW WILDLIFE:***

**PLEASE AVOID CALLING WILDLIFE TRAPPERS FOR NUISANCE WILDLIFE PROBLEMS UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY SINCE MOST WILDLIFE TRAPPERS EUTHANIZE ALL CAPTURED WILDLIFE. BE SURE TO CHECK WITH YOUR STATE WILDLIFE AGENCY REGARDING WILDLIFE TRAPPING LAWS BEFORE YOU CONTACT A WILDLIFE TRAPPER SINCE RELEASE OR RELOCATION OF CAPTURED WILDLIFE IS ILLEGAL IN SOME STATES. ALSO, BE ADVISED THAT SOME WILDLIFE TRAPPERS ARE UNETHICAL AND WILL MISLEAD YOU BY PROVIDING FALSE INFORMATION REGARDING THEIR INDIVIDUAL TRAPPING PROCESSES. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION INCLUDES POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR A FEW COMMON NUISANCE ISSUES.**

### **NUISANCE ANIMALS “UNINVITED GUESTS”**

#### **Preventive and Long Term Solutions For**

#### **"Living With Wildlife"**

*By Sally Joosten*

It takes two elements to make a wildlife nuisance problem: people and wildlife. Each year, wildlife is forced to live closer to people or to compete with them for food, shelter, and space. Common sense solutions to what we consider a nuisance situation can help us share our environment with wildlife. Animals, especially raccoons and squirrels, frequently will invade attics and chimneys. The reason they do this is because these places are dark and quiet. It's an ideal place to rest and raise their young. Think about it, the reason wild animals don't come into our living quarters is because it's lit up and people are talking. So, what we need to do is reverse the dark and quiet and make it an undesirable place for the creature. The following information should help:

#### **RACCOONS**

##### **In Chimney:**

- 1) Lower a mechanics trouble light (the kind that has a protective wire cage around the bulb) three fourths of the way down the chimney.
- 2) Place a radio on a box, speaker side up (so it's almost against the damper) inside the fireplace. Set dial to a talk station (not music). It does not need to be blaring. This may take several days if she has young. When the animal has vacated, cap chimney.

##### **CAUTION:**

**Do not light a fire to try to smoke an animal out! The babies lay directly on the damper and can be severely burned. Many people just decide to wait until the young raccoons are old enough to follow mom and then have their chimney capped.**

##### **In Attic:**

Use clamp on reflector light with flasher disc or a strobe light (may require more than one). Put radio on talk station in attic. When you suspect the animal is gone, tack or staple a plastic garbage bag over the entry hole (leave lights and radio going). If the plastic is not broken through after three nights, repair the hole. Keep the lights and radio going for several days in case animal decides to check area. Again, monitor frequently.

**Remember: it's important to keep lights and radio going 24 hours a day, not just at night. These animals sleep during the day and forage at night so you want to disturb their sleep during the day as well as making it an uncomfortable situation at night. This also works for the raccoon that is looking for a place to have her young. If you hear an animal on your roof at night, take precautions before they manage to get through to the attic. Remember, they are seeking a dark quiet place.**

##### **In Crawl Space or Under Deck:**

Use same solution as for attic.

#### NOTE 1:

Flasher discs are available at many hardware stores, and are more effective as they make the light go on and off which is irritating to the animal. Follow advice on manufacture's label for type of light bulb.

**NOTE 2:** Constant crying, especially during the daytime usually indicates the babies are orphaned. Never live trap the raccoon if it is baby season. The young may be in an inaccessible place and could die leaving you with a bad smell along with flies and maggots in your home. Also DO NOT block the mother raccoon from her young or have the babies taken away. Raccoons are excellent mothers and will create more damage trying to find them. As long as she has access to her babies, she will not do anymore damage.

#### **In Garbage Cans:**

Garbage attracts both domestic and wild creatures. If possible, keep it in a garage. If that's not possible, use heavy garbage cans with tight fitting lids. Pour ammonia over garbage each time you add to it, and fasten lids with heavy rubber bungee cords.

#### **SQUIRRELS**

##### **In Chimney:**

Usually a squirrel in the chimney has fallen in by accident and has a difficult time climbing out. Try lowering a thick, heavy rope or knotted sheets, so the animal can climb out. When gone, cap chimney.

##### **In Attic:**

Use same solution used for raccoons in the attic except use a clamp on light with a flasher disc placed above a plastic or blow-up hawk. Hawks are their natural enemy and predator.

#### **SKUNKS**

##### **Under Foundation:**

Use a clamp-on reflector light with a flasher disc and a 25 or 40 watt light bulb inserted in it. Place it over a blow-up or plastic great horned owl (the only predator of skunks). Stake the owl with the light near the den of the skunk. Turn light on at dusk and off in the morning. Move owl and light every other day to prevent skunk from getting used to it. Sprinkle flour in front of hole to show tracks exiting. This may take several days if the skunk has young. When you suspect the animal is gone, stuff a large plastic garbage bag in the hole and observe for any disturbance. If none, then fill hole. Continue with the owl and light for one to two weeks afterwards.

NOTE: A more permanent solution to keep animals from digging under your foundation is to dig down around the foundation about a foot. Take 1/2 inch hardware cloth, about 24 inches wide, and bend it in half so it resembles an "L" shape. Put the flat part up against the foundation, with the "L" coming away from the foundation and cover all the hardware cloth with dirt. This can be done all along the foundation or stoop of your home. When the animal tries to dig, the "L" prevents it from digging down or under the foundation.

##### **Digging Up Lawns:**

Use the great horned owl, and light solution.

#### **WOODPECKERS**

##### **Doing Damage To House:**

Suspend plastic or blow-up hawk from overhang. Change position every other day. Other effective means are balloons or blow -up punch balls with huge eyes drawn on them suspended from overhang. Other things that have been effective are windsocks, plastic garbage bags or strips tacked or stapled to the overhang at least 8 inches out (They need to be able to flap in the wind).

NOTE: Woodpeckers peck on our homes (usually cedar or wood siding) for three reasons. If the damage is along the seams of the wood, the bird is finding a food source, bugs, spiders, and possibly termites. Usually you can divert their attention by putting up suet feeders well away from the house. Another reason woodpeckers peck on our homes (especially in Spring) is to drum for a mate. This type of damage is usually found on the boards with lots of little holes. The third reason woodpeckers do damage is to make a hole for nesting. This damage is usually done in one spot and they continue to make it bigger. One solution is to attach a cedar birdhouse in the exact spot to fool the birds into thinking they accomplished what they set out to do. However, putting up different types of birdhouses in nearby trees, early in the year that woodpeckers would use can also help. Since woodpeckers are cavity nesters, leaving dead trees (as long as they aren't a danger) is a natural solution. They find insects, can drum for a mate, and have their home! Using the blow -up hawk has been effective for all three problems.

## **ANIMALS IN THE GARDEN**

Unfortunately, wild animals look upon our gardens as a "people provided picnic" and it is very difficult to keep all creatures out. A fence of course, will deter some creatures such as deer and rabbits. That is, of course, if the fence is high enough and buried a foot into the ground so an animal cannot dig under it. Some people who live in the country have had good luck with low volt electric wire placed inside the fence and around the garden, but people should check local ordinances to see if it's legal. It certainly isn't recommended for people who live in towns!

Blow-up hawks, owls, and snakes have been effective in deterring many animals (Remember to change position in garden frequently). Your local nursery usually carries these and may also have new products that will help in keeping wildlife out of gardens and flowerbeds.

TIP: When planting flower bulbs, place 1 inch hardware cloth over the bulbs before you cover them with dirt. The leaves grow through the wire, and the bulbs are protected from creatures trying to dig them up.

## **BATS**

### **In Attic:**

Some bats are able to get through a 3/8 of an inch opening or a hole the size of a dime! Use the flashing lights and radio as outlined for raccoons. Make sure to check your attic for openings. Do this during the day and see if there are places where the light shows through. Caulk cracks and fix holes. Check attic vents. Most vents are made of flimsy metal (a raccoon could easily rip one off). Bats can fit through the slits in the vent. You can secure these with heavy mesh on the inside and still allow air to pass through.

**NOTE: Bats are extremely beneficial to us. A single little brown bat can eat up to 1000 mosquitoes in one hour!**

## **BIRDS PECKING OR FLYING INTO WINDOWS**

Perhaps you are sitting in your kitchen and notice a cardinal that keeps flying into your sliding glass door or window, or you observe a robin banging into your car window or side view mirror. What gives? Is the bird trying to get into your house or car? The answer is no. What you are observing is called "mirror image". The bird sees its reflection in the glass or mirror and thinks there is an intruder in his territory! His instinct is to defend his territory and his mate by fighting the intruder (his image) and get the intruder to leave, so he continues to attack the image. Unfortunately, many of these birds become injured or have even died when they continue to bang into the glass.

### **SOLUTION:**

Mirror image occurs in the Spring when birds are establishing a territory, courting their mate, and nesting. Closing the drapes does not solve the problem as the bird still sees itself in the glass so you must work on the outside of the glass to prevent the bird from seeing its reflection. Cutout silhouettes of cooper hawks taped on the outside of the window have proven to be effective for "mirror image" as well as for birds who mistakenly fly into windows because they see the reflection of trees and sky. However, often the nest is in a nearby tree or bush close to the window and putting up the cooper hawks may discourage the parents from returning to their nest, and we certainly don't want to discourage our feathered friends from nesting in our yards. Tempura paint can be brushed on the outside of the window and washes off easily with water. Using the white color still allows light to come through. When the young have vacated the nest wash off the paint. Another product that works very well is the old product called Glass Wax which you may be able to find in some hardware stores. Some people use paper or tape clear plastic bags on the outside of the window. Your goal is to eliminate any reflection so the bird cannot see itself.

**NOTE: Please remember that when most baby birds fledge (leave the nest), they are unable to fly right away and spend most of their time on the ground. This makes them very vulnerable to predators. Please help them by keeping your cat indoors and your dog on a leash during this critical time.**

## **STARLINGS AND HOUSE SPARROWS**

Starlings and house sparrows are cavity nesters and are notorious for building nests in dryer vents, range hood vents, air conditioners, gutters, old cars, boats, etc. It is important to make sure you check these areas often and screen over vents to prevent birds from plugging them.

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*(Sally Joosten is a founding Board member of GROW Wildlife, Inc. and has been a professional wildlife rehabilitator and educator, specializing in teaching others who are getting started in the field of wildlife rehabilitation since 1963. She is founder & former Director of McHenry County Conservation District Wildlife Center located in Illinois for twenty years beginning in 1975. She is a founding Board member of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (NWRA) and Co-author of "NWRA Principles of Wildlife Rehabilitation, The Essential Guide for Novice and Experienced Rehabilitators" (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Editions). She is founding Board member and current Vice President of the Illinois Wildlife Rehabilitators Association. She has written numerous published papers. She was the recipient of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association's Lifetime Achievement Award in 1998 and the National Registry of Who's Who in 1999.)*