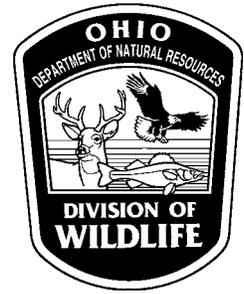


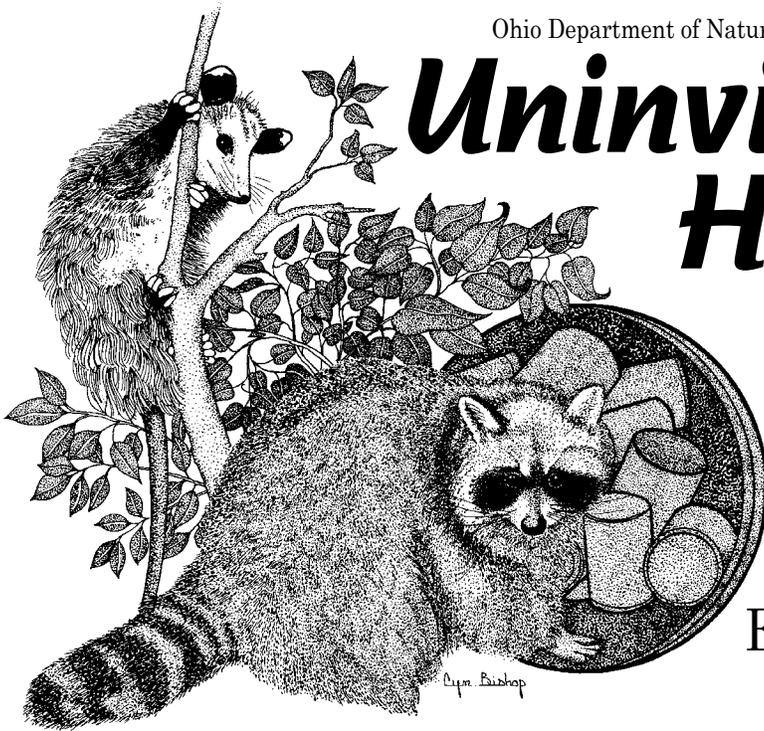
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Ohio Department of Natural Resources



# Uninvited House Guests

## Preventing and Dealing with Nuisance Wildlife Encounters

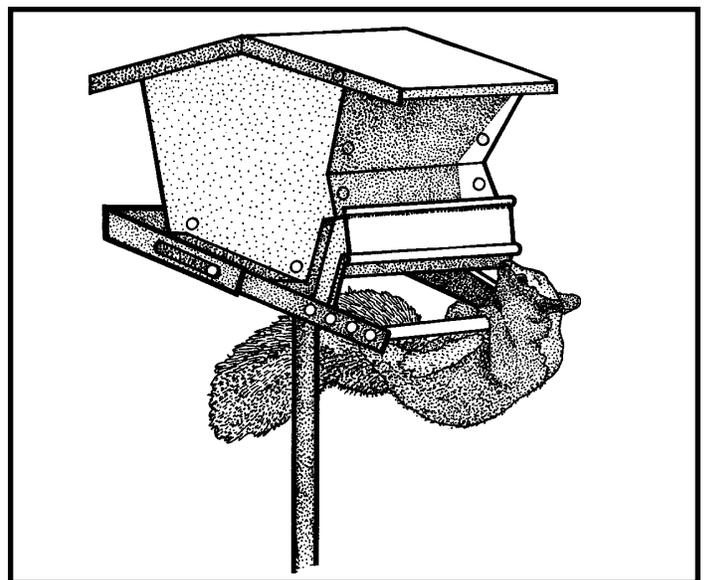


More than 75 percent of the U.S. population lives in urban areas. While the growth of cities and subdivisions displaces some wildlife, many species actually benefit from urban growth and thrive in the habitat available in parks, undeveloped parcels of land and vacant lots, along stream and river corridors and in our backyard landscapes. Their presence can provide recreational and educational viewing opportunities. For many people, especially children, viewing wildlife in the backyard is exciting. People and wildlife can peacefully coexist in most situations. However, there may be times when conflicts arise.

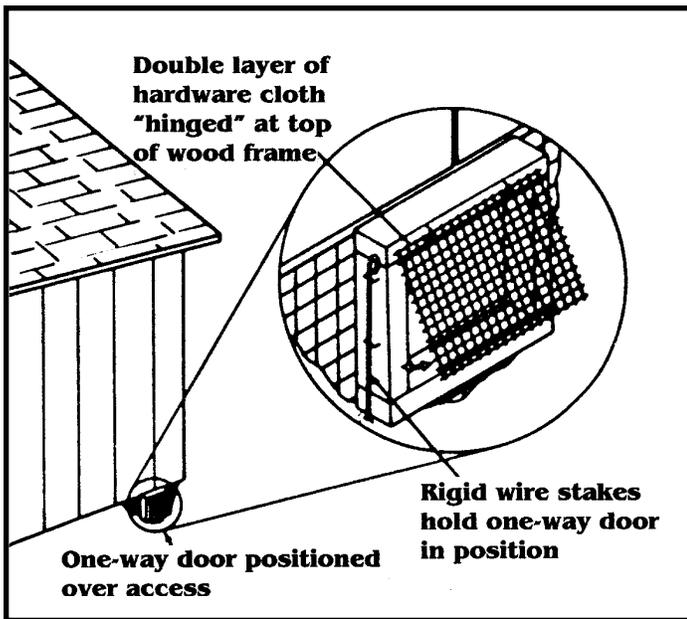
Sometimes the proximity of wildlife to people's homes can cause problems. The simplest and most effective solutions involve preventing wildlife problems before they happen, instead of coping with a wild animal who has become a trouble-causing resident. Most of the common problems associated with urban wildlife (for example, squirrels in the attic, skunks under the deck, or raccoons rooting through the garbage) can be avoided by implementing a few simple and inexpensive measures. The following two-part discussion includes (1) how to reduce the likelihood of wildlife becoming a nuisance, and (2) how to control specific wildlife species after they become a nuisance.

## PREVENTION

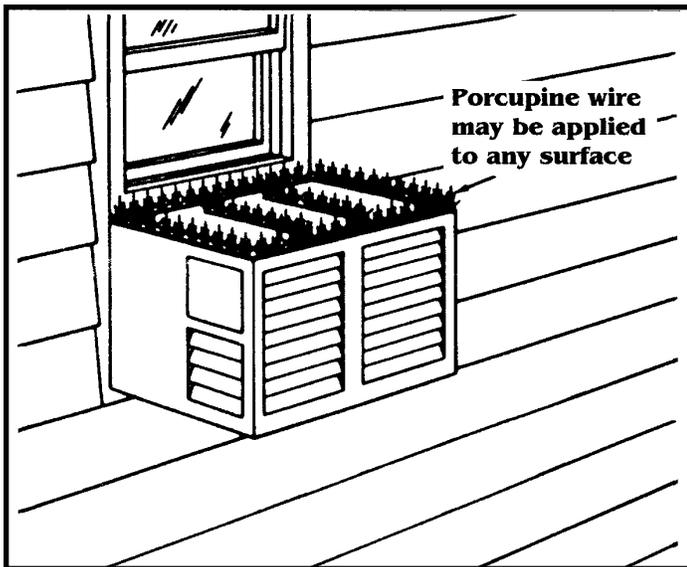
- Don't feed wildlife. If you choose to feed songbirds, place the feeder where it is inaccessible to other wildlife species. Use a feeder with a gravity-operated treadle to discourage squirrels, and don't let spilled food accumulate.



GRAVITY-OPERATED TREADLE

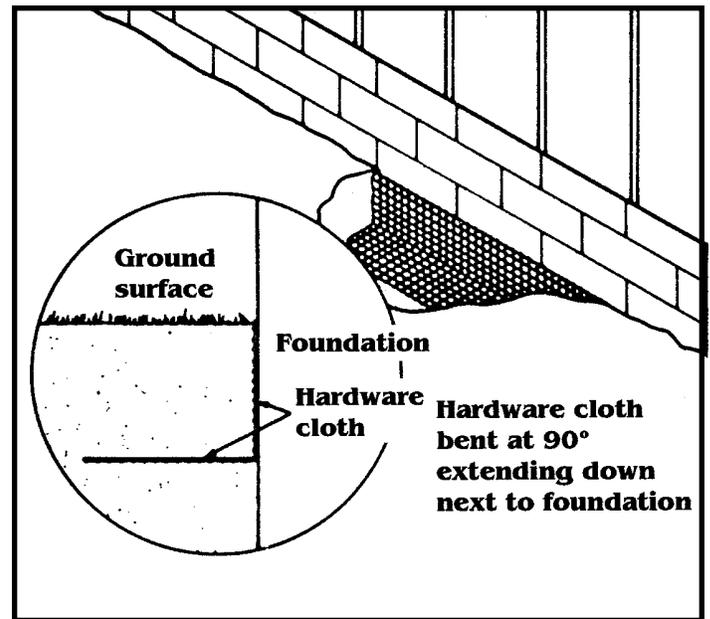


ONE-WAY DOOR



PORCUPINE WIRE

- Trim tree branches that extend over your roof or install a three-foot-wide band of sheet metal (six feet above the ground) around the trunks of trees which overhang your house. This will reduce the access raccoons and squirrels have to your roof.
- Cover window wells with grates, bubbles or hardware cloth.
- Keep pet food inside.
- Seal up holes around and under home foundations. Bury 1/4-inch mesh hardware cloth one to two feet deep in places where animals might gain access through digging.

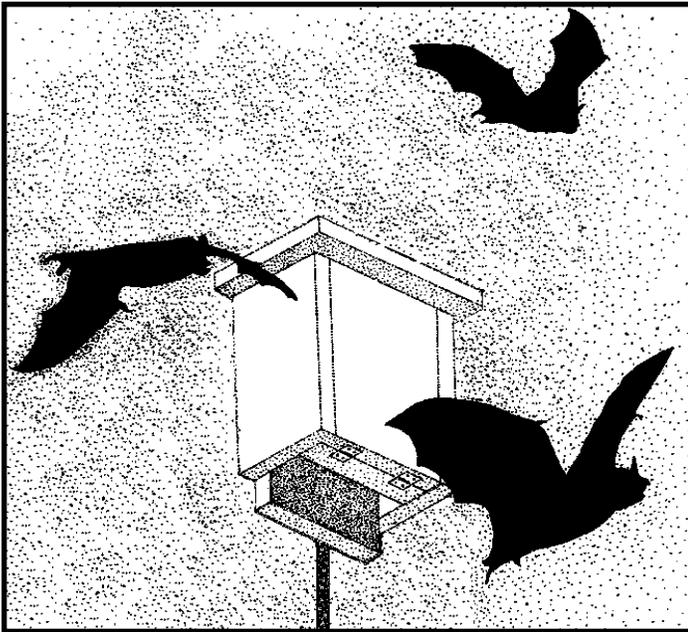


FOUNDATION SKIRT

- Store garbage in metal or plastic containers with tight-fitting lids. Keep the containers in the garage or shed and put trash out only when it is scheduled for pick up.
- Fence gardens and cover fruit trees and berry bushes with netting.
- Screen fireplace chimneys and furnaces as well as attic and dryer vents. Keep dampers closed when not in use (consult a knowledgeable source to prevent fire or safety hazards).
- Decks built less than two feet off the ground should have 1/4-inch mesh hardware cloth nailed from the top of the outside joists to the bottom of a 10-inch trench, leaving about six to eight inches of extra hardware cloth at the bottom to form an "L" shape. Wooden lattice can be added for aesthetics.
- Seal all holes and cracks in your foundation, siding or stucco to keep rats, mice, bats, insects, and snakes out. Common entry points include chimneys; gaps around window air conditioners, water pipes or electric outlets; openings in interior walls that lead to the attic or ceiling; loose or shrunken siding boards; and loose vent covers.
- Repair broken, weak or rotted areas on the roof, soffit and fascia of your house.
- Mark large windows with strips of white tape or raptor (hawk) silhouettes to avert birds from flying into the window.

# CONTROL

## BATS



Most bats live near human habitations without ever making their presence known. Bats are the only major predator of night-flying insects and eat a variety of insects as well.

Bats use existing openings (cracks as small as 3/8 inches) to enter buildings or to roost in attics. To exclude the bats wait until they leave for the night to feed, then seal the entrance. It is wise to do this in August after the young have learned to fly.

Occasionally a bat may get in your house. If one does, there is no reason to panic! Close interior doors, confine it to one room if possible, and open a window or exterior door. The bat will leave as soon as it locates the exit. If the bat lands on a curtain or piece of furniture, cover it with a jar or a towel, or pick it up with a leather glove, and release it outdoors. Determine how the bat got into the house and seal the opening(s).

## ROOSTING BIRDS

Sparrows, starlings, and pigeons are the most troublesome of the birds commonly found in the urban environment. When these birds congregate in large numbers their droppings can create a foul-smelling, unsightly mess.

Netting can effectively be used to exclude birds from virtually any kind of structure and from roosting or nesting in trees. The net will not entangle birds. Netting may

be draped across the front of buildings; fasten it tightly from above windows to below the ledge to discourage perching.

Most birds prefer to perch on flat surfaces. Surfaces with an angle of 60 degrees or greater cause birds to slide off when they try to land. Wood or metal sheathing cut at an angle can also be added to the problem area. Another deterrent is to install porcupine wire on ledges and rails where birds roost. Thinning tree branches will remove perch sites and reduce a source of wind protection, which may force the birds to move to another site. Combinations of noise (AM/FM radio, wind chimes, firecrackers, banging pots and pans) and visual stimuli (colored flags, reflective tape, revolving lights, balloons, replicas of hawks and owls) used persistently can evict birds. Control measures should be initiated as soon as the problem is identified.

## RACCOONS



Raccoons are well adapted to urban living. Raccoon damage typically involves raiding gardens, upsetting trash cans and taking up residence in chimneys, attics or other unwanted areas. Control is not difficult, but requires persistence.

Garden fruits and vegetables can be very appealing and accessible to raccoons. For garden plots, a single strand of electric fence can be strung eight inches above the ground.

An inexpensive radio which is turned on, placed under a garbage can and left in the garden overnight, will also often discourage raccoons from approaching.

The easiest solution for garbage can raids is to store the cans inside the garage or a shed overnight. Raccoons may also be repelled by coating the outside of

the can with a weak solution of cayenne pepper in water or by placing a small dish of ammonia in the bottom of an empty can.

Uncapped chimneys are appealing nest den sites to raccoons. When this occurs they may be evicted by noise, combined with bright lights or a pan of ammonia sealed in the fireplace. Once the raccoon vacates the chimney, install a chimney cap. Identify and seal other attic entries after evicting the raccoon. Overhanging tree limbs provide easy access to your roof. Inspect your house and trim tree limbs where needed.

Occasionally raccoons will enter a house through a pet door. Since they can cause considerable damage if panicked, it is advisable to quietly open windows and doors through which the animal may exit and close doors that provide access to other parts of the house, before leaving the room. Wait quietly for the animal to escape.

Raccoons can transmit rabies, canine distemper, and parvovirus to domestic animals and humans. You should avoid any raccoon which has lost its fear of humans or appears uncoordinated, confused or listless. If you encounter such an animal, call your district wildlife office or county wildlife officer immediately.

Nuisance or sick raccoons may be trapped without a permit, but it is illegal to live trap and relocate them to a new area. In order to prevent the possible spread of raccoon diseases in Ohio all live trapped raccoons must be released again on the homeowner's property or humanely euthanized. Consult your district wildlife office for further information.

## ***SKUNKS AND OPOSSUMS***

Skunks and opossums seldom cause damage to property other than raiding garbage or eating pet food. They sometimes reside under buildings or in rock and wood piles. Discourage visits by taking appropriate precautions. In confined spaces skunks or opossums may be driven away by placing an ammonia-soaked towel in the den. Install a one-way door until you are sure the animal(s) have left, then permanently seal the entrance. An animal that becomes trapped in a window well will climb out if you place a rough board in the well that extends to the top. If an animal gets into the house, open a door and calmly allow it to exit. Don't chase or excite a skunk!

Nuisance or sick skunks and opossums may be trapped without a permit, but as with raccoons they may not be relocated. Consult your district wildlife office for further information.

## ***SNAKES***

There are 32 species and subspecies of snakes in Ohio. Most snakes are beneficial in helping to control destructive insects and rodents. Only three species of snakes in Ohio (the copperhead, and the massasauga and timber rattlesnakes) are venomous. None of these snakes are common.

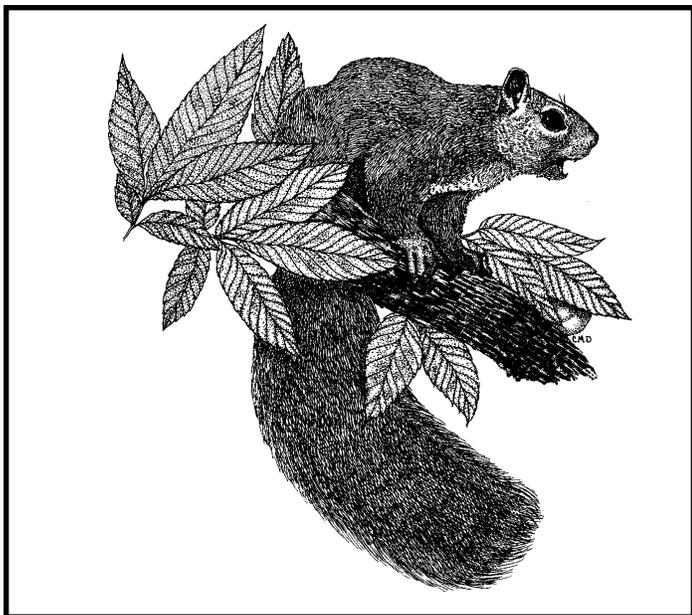
Problems with snakes range from occasional encounters with a single snake to infestations of large numbers of snakes in basements and out-building foundations. Snakes should be valued for their rodent- and insect-eating habits. A snake which takes up residence where it cannot be tolerated should be captured and released at least a mile away from the dwelling.

You can make an area less attractive to snakes by controlling insect and rodent populations; removing piles of junk, rocks, brush and boards; and keeping grass mowed and landscapes clean.

To remove a snake already in a building, you must first find it. If a snake is difficult to find in the open, place a damp cloth or burlap bag covered with a board or shingle on the basement floor. Use a 1/2 to 1 inch "spacer" to elevate the board so the snake can easily get under it. The combination of dampness and shelter is attractive to snakes, making them easier to capture. Snakes can be picked up with a hook or hoe, or by making a noose with a loose slipknot in a strong piece of string and attaching it to a short, strong stick. Lower the snake into a strong paper or cloth bag with no holes. If you use the string, clip the noose with a pair of scissors before dropping the snake in the bag. Transport the snake as soon as possible to a woodlot or undeveloped area away from other houses.

Another effective way to capture snakes inside a home is to use a glueboard. These can be purchased in a variety of places such as agriculture supply and hardware stores. Most small snakes can be captured using a single glueboard placed against a wall but away from pipes or other objects that a snake could use for leverage to escape. For larger snakes (four to five feet long) attach several glueboards side-by-side to a piece of plywood. Release snakes by pouring vegetable oil or common cooking oil over the snake where it is adhered to the glueboard. Glueboards should only be used indoors or under structures where children, pets and other wildlife cannot reach them.

## SQUIRRELS



Squirrels are never found far from the shelter provided by trees. They are opportunistic foragers feeding on acorns, nuts, fruits, berries, corn, fungi, flower bulbs, and bird seed. They readily adapt to suburban and urban areas.

Chasing a frantic squirrel inside your house can result in additional damage. If a squirrel is trapped, open a door or window, block off the room it is in and quietly wait for the squirrel to exit. Once the squirrel is gone, identify where the squirrel entered and seal the access. If the squirrel is in the fireplace, close the damper, block off the room and open an exterior door or window to provide an escape route for the squirrel.

Squirrels trapped inside the chimney flue can be freed by closing the damper and lowering a 1/2-inch diameter rope into the chimney from the roof. The rope must be long enough to reach down to the damper. Anchor the upper end and wait for the squirrel to climb out, then cover the chimney. Before evicting a resident squirrel from the attic determine if young are in the nest and where the female's entrance is located. If there are no young, scare the squirrel out by banging on the rafters inside the attic or wait until the squirrel leaves for the day. Seal the entrance with 1/4-inch hardware cloth or with sheet metal. Extend the seal at least six inches beyond the hole. If young are present, locate the entrance and install a one-way door until all have left the nest, then proceed as previously described.

## WOODPECKERS

There are seven species of woodpeckers in Ohio. The majority of woodpeckers do most of their pecking on dead or dying trees. Woodpeckers peck for several reasons: to announce their territory, to feed on insects and to excavate nest cavities. In suburban areas woodpeckers may use houses and drain spouts. No one really knows why, but natural wood siding, a house's large size and better sound production may make houses seem like "super trees" to the birds. The key to control is to take action as soon as the woodpecker shows signs of becoming a pest.

A troublesome woodpecker may be discouraged by employing one or a combination of techniques: Open a nearby window and shout or bang pans whenever the woodpecker is heard; hang strips of foil, streamers, cloth, or colorful helium filled mylar balloons near the problem area to frighten the bird; spray a water hose near the bird to frighten it; eliminate any ledges or cracks the woodpecker may be using when pecking; or cover the damaged area with screen, hardware cloth or sheet metal until the bird has been discouraged. Repair any damage caused by the woodpecker promptly. If insects in the siding seem to be the cause, caulk all the tunnels in the siding. Insecticides and toxic wood preservatives seem to repel woodpeckers as well as providing wood care benefits.

Woodpeckers are protected by federal and state laws. They may only be captured or killed with a special permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Animal Damage Control. Call the Division of Wildlife for phone numbers.

## TRAPPING

For those who choose to, trapping can be an effective method of dealing with a troublesome wildlife "guest." The most commonly used device is a cage-like, live-trap which captures the animal physically unharmed. Live traps can be built at home or purchased from a commercial source. Traps should be checked twice a day (morning and evening) to replenish bait or to humanely deal with the captured animal. Raccoons, opossums, and skunks cannot be released off-site, they must be euthanized or released on the same property. It is illegal to live trap and relocate raccoons, skunks, and opossums in Ohio.

# CANADA GEESE

Canada geese are probably the most adaptable and tolerant of all native waterfowl. If left undisturbed, they will readily establish nesting territories on any suitable pond, be it located on a farm, backyard, golf course, apartment or condominium complex, or city park. Most people will welcome and start feeding the first pair of geese on their pond, but these geese will soon wear out their welcome. In just a few years, a pair of geese can easily become 50 to 100 birds. The feces will foul the areas around the pond and surrounding yards and also damage the lawn, pond, and other vegetation. Geese that are fed will lose their fear of humans and attack adults, children, and pets during the nesting season (March through June). **DO NOT FEED GEESE.** Feeding bread, corn, potato chips, popcorn, and other human food items harms the geese and sets the scene for goose attacks on people.

Canada geese are protected under both the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Ohio state law. This protection extends to the geese, goslings, nests, and eggs. Non-lethal scare and hazing tactics, which do not harm the geese, are allowed. These tactics include: pyrotechnics, dogs, barriers, a grid on the pond, laser pointers (at night), distress calls, or grape-flavored repellants such as Flight Control. If non-lethal tactics have been used in the past, without success, the Division of Wildlife may issue an egg addling (shaking) permit. Hunting in the fall, outside city limits, is a good method to reduce the goose population, feed people, and further scare the geese away. For more information, the map of district offices and their phone numbers is listed below.

## ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

Contact your district wildlife office for a listing of nuisance wildlife trappers in your area or for additional information on wildlife control. You can also check in the yellow pages under pest control to find private companies who may help.

<p><b>DISTRICT ONE</b> 614 / 644-3925 1500 Dublin Rd., Columbus 43215</p> <p><b>DISTRICT TWO</b> 419 / 424-5000 952 Lima Ave., Findlay 45840</p> <p><b>DISTRICT THREE</b> 330 / 644-2293 912 Portage Lakes Dr., Akron 44319</p> <p><b>DISTRICT FOUR</b> 740 / 589-9930 360 E. State St., Athens 45701</p> <p><b>DISTRICT FIVE</b> 937 / 372-9261 1076 Old Springfield Pike, Xenia 45385-1238</p>	
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