

Learning to Coexist with Wildlife

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Everywhere we look, there is some form of wildlife to be found. They are going to cross our highways, nest and feed around homes, make noise, and leave behind some droppings, all of which may interrupt the everyday life of some. Some like to interact with humans while others tend to avoid humans. Many species do not cause outright damage to a property but are considered a nuisance by many people simply by their presence in a specific location. As we build more homes or move into areas where wildlife is to be found, there are several considerations that should be taken under advisement to develop a relationship where we can peacefully coexist with the wildlife that call our area home.

To keep any nuisance wildlife from causing damage, there are several things to keep in mind. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) provides several tips landowners can utilize to prevent any wildlife conflicts in both general terms and relating to specific species. On a general note, one thing to consider is to not feed wildlife. If you would choose to feed songbirds to attract them to your backyard, be sure to place the feeder in an area where the birds can reach the feeder but where other wildlife are unable to get to it. ODNR also suggest that you use feeders with a gravity operated treadle which will discourage squirrels from enjoying the food but also not to allow any spilled food to pile up. To keep raccoons at bay, be sure to keep tree branches trimmed that tend to extend out over your roof. This will help to reduce the access that raccoons have to your roof.

Do you find yourself picking up your garbage after you have already bagged it up? Animals such as raccoons and opossums see this as a welcome opportunity for a meal with the food items that can be found in these bags as they look for anywhere that provides easy access to food. To avoid this problem, be sure to place your wastes in a metal or even a plastic container which has a lid that fits nice and snug on the container and try to avoid putting it out until your scheduled pickup day. Following these simple tips will help you save a lot of headache in the long run!

Want to keep animals from getting into your home? ODNR reminds homeowners to seal all holes and cracks in your foundation, siding, or stucco which are larger than 3/8 inch which will help to keep any rodents such as mice/rats, bats, and snakes from entering their home. Among the common entry areas into your home for these animals are the chimney, spaces around window-mounted air conditioners, water pipes, electrical outlets, openings in interior walls leading to an attic or ceiling, or loose vent covers, according to ODNR. Be sure to regularly check these areas to ensure new cracks don't develop or that cracks don't reform that may allow animal entry.

Let's now talk specifically about a few species found around our area and how you can coexist with them. Raccoons are quite well adapted to living in both a rural or urban setting and damage from them typically involves damage to gardens, raiding garbage containers, or making a home in your chimney. ODNR stresses that raccoon

control is certainly not difficult and that it takes a lot of persistence. To control raccoons around the garden, a single electric fence strand placed eight inches above the ground can prove beneficial, according to ODNR. You can also try placing a radio underneath a garbage can or placed within the garden can also be a deterrent for these animals. Another option is to sprinkle some cayenne pepper lightly in a solution of water which will repel the raccoon.

It is not uncommon for raccoons to enter homes through pet doors. ODNR states that it is important not to startle the raccoon but to quietly open windows or doors which they can easily use to escape as they can cause extensive damage if they are startled. This is a standard practice to get squirrels out of your home as well. Snakes are another animal which can commonly be encountered with 32 species and subspecies of snakes found in Ohio. Typically, snake issues will vary with the occasional encounter to large infestations in basements or out-building foundations. Areas can be made less attractive to snakes by controlling rodent and insect populations, removing piles of rocks, brush, or boards, and keeping the grass mowed and landscapes clean, according to ODNR. It is important to keep in mind the importance that snakes serve when it comes to their valuable rodent and insect feeding habits.

With a few simple steps, you can live in existence with the numerous wildlife that call Ohio home. Should you have any questions with wildlife, you can call the Paulding Soil & Water Conservation District at 419-399-4771 or the Ohio Department of Natural Resources District 2 Findlay Office at 419-424-5000.