

Methods for Peaceful Coexistence

Virtually all studies agree that we have no other viable alternative but to find ways to peacefully coexist. Given this fact, there are a number of very simple rules that will allow man and wildlife to live side-by-side without causing either significant distress. Some of these rules are not new at all. In fact, they are rules that we all lived by 50 years ago. Back then, our backyards were the woods, "in the country" was just down the road and "wilderness areas" were anywhere outside the perimeter. First, it is important to understand that wild animals are rarely a threat to humans, especially in urban environments. There are 12,980 domestic dog attacks EVERY DAY on humans in this country. How often do you hear of a wild animal attack? Our fears are misplaced. In order to peacefully coexist with our wild cousins, we only need to understand their behaviors and what to expect from them. With the knowledge provided in the species index (A-G) and (H-Z) and these new rules, you will have no reason to fear wildlife. In fact, with this knowledge, you will likely find yourself enjoying the experience of observing wildlife in your own back yard. Most of the rules listed below are common sense; those of you living in areas populated by wildlife have learned and already practice these rules.

Tips for Urban Living Always expect wildlife to be nearby. Any time that wildlife enters an area where it is not welcome, SCARE IT AWAY. Wildlife perceives you as the dominant species and will fear you as long as you fulfill that role. Reinforcing their continued fear of humans is the key to keeping them safe and insuring our safety. Wild animals will learn and respect the rules you set for them. Simply stand tall, wave your hands and yell or throw something their direction or spray them with a hose.

CHILDREN AND PETS Never allow small children or pets to go outside alone or unattended especially at dawn or dusk. Do not feed pets outside. (The smell of pet food will attract wildlife.) Do not allow your pets to roam free. (Free roaming cats and dogs have a 30% shorter life expectancy than those who are cared for properly by providing them with a safe outside enclosure or keeping them as inside pets). All pets should be vaccinated. When walking your pets, always put them on a leash.

HOUSE Do not place garbage outside until the morning of pick-up. If you insist on keeping garbage outside, make sure the container is animal proof. (The lid must be raccoon proof — the top must be secured and the container should be secured from the possibility of being knocked over). Secure compost piles or bins. All grills should be cleaned of any food residue. Remove, seal, or lock pet doors, especially from dusk to dawn. If you are concerned about wildlife in your chimney, install chimney cap (needed only for chimney swifts). Keep gutters and downspouts clear of nesting debris. Seal all soffit, ridge, and gable vents with ½ inch hardware cloth. Cover all roof vent pipes and dryer vent pipes with proper exclusion devices. Make sure that all basement vents and hatch doors are secure. Any container that will hold water should be turned upside down to limit water sources and eliminate breeding grounds for mosquitoes. All man made liquid containers should be covered with secure lids.

PROPERTY Bird feeders and bird baths will attract wildlife. Fruit trees and gardens will attract wildlife. Dense ground cover offers shelter to wildlife. (Clearing shrubbery and ground cover will discourage wildlife. Clear open space exposes wildlife to predators and most wildlife will choose to remain close to areas where they can hide instantly). Do not use poisonous chemicals outside. (This is wise not only for wildlife but also for your children and pets. They also play in the grass and around the plants). (return to top)

The Index of Southeastern Wildlife (A-G) and (H-Z) each provide factual information and natural behaviors on the most common species of wildlife seen in an urban setting. Each species account will also give you appropriate human responses and exclusion methods for these animals. We naturally fear the unknown but with this new information you will not be facing the unexpected. Ready your home/property for wildlife baby season. Save 1000's of wild animals and extend the life of your pet cat: The Domestic Cat and Cat Enclosures.