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## Nuisance Wildlife in & around the Home

A woodchuck mows down an entire row of new cabbage transplants... A porcupine is destroying a hedge of hemlocks... Flying squirrels are keeping family members awake, chattering and racing through the walls all night. A black bear has been raiding the bird feeder just outside the kitchen window...

New Hampshire is blessed with an abundance native wild animals. But sooner or later, most Granite State households - urban, suburban and rural alike - will experience an unexpected, frustrating or potentially dangerous encounter with a wild creature and wonder what to do about it.

This fact sheet contains some basic guidelines for dealing with wild animals in and around the home. The suggestions come from Cooperative Extension specialists and wildlife biologists at Wildlife Services, a federally and cooperatively-funded branch of the US Department of Agriculture that specializes in reducing human-wildlife conflicts. The agency conducts research at the National Wildlife Research Center in Fort Collins, CO, aimed primarily at non-lethal means of reducing conflict.

First, a few general principles:

- ***Don't treat wild animals as pets or family entertainment.*** Encourage wild animals to remain wild. Do not feed them around your home. Make loud noises to scare them away.
- ***Whenever moving a dead animal,*** wear heavy protective gloves. The rabies virus can survive in saliva and central nervous tissue for hours after a rabid animal has died. Also, there's always a possibility the animal is not quite dead and will summon the strength to bite someone trying to move it.
- ***Do not live-trap and release wild animals miles from your home.*** While the idea of trapping a wild animal and releasing it a few miles down the road sounds appealing, this practice actually makes the animal easy prey to predators or condemns the animal to a slow death by starvation. Wild animals can not readily find adequate food, water, shelter and protection from predators in a new territory. Peaceful coexistence, habitat modification, repellents, scare tactics, shooting (where legal) or quick-kill traps are more humane methods of dealing with nuisance wildlife.
- ***When faced with a wildlife problem,*** don't rely on a single technique: use repellents, scare tactics and habitat modification simultaneously.
- ***Under Federal law, it is illegal to kill or possess a migratory bird, to remove, or even touch the nest of a protected bird without a special permit.*** Homeowners with bird problems beyond the scope of barriers, repellents or scare tactics should consult Wildlife Services (223-6832).

## Bats

- Bats like an environment that's hot, dark and still. To repel them, turn on a light and run a fan.
- Set up a "bat watch" to see how bats come and go from home. Once entrances have been located, bat-proof the home by sealing the entrances with one-way doors (hardware cloth or screening placed over the hole to form a long sleeve. The best time to seal a home is in early spring or late fall; do not close entrances between May and August to avoid sealing in nursing pups.

*The US Centers for Disease Control recommends if a family wakes to find a bat in an occupied bedroom, they should attempt to have the bat captured and tested for rabies. If unable to capture the bat, they should consult their physician about the advisability of receiving rabies shots.*

## Bears

- Remove all potential food sources: bags of stored pet foods or bird seed, bird feeders, bags of garbage.
- *Do not attempt to manage a wild bear on your own. Contact **Bearline** 1-888-SHYBEAR (749-2327).*

## Beavers

- Shoot if local ordinances permit.
- Protect individual trees with three-foot high cylinders of hardware cloth encircling the trunk.
- Install water control device to control level of dam, making the environment less attractive to beavers.
- Hire a licensed trapper\*

## Birds

- To protect fruit and other crops, create barriers: bird netting, an overhead grid of wires or twisted Mylar strips.
- To protect fruit crops from bird attack, spray *Rejexit*, a taste repellent.
- If crows are causing damage, it's legal to shoot them if town ordinances permit.
- For problems with Canada Geese, spray *Flight Control*, a taste and odor repellent, on grass.
- Use frightening devices.

## Chipmunks

- Kill in rat traps baited with fruit or peanut butter.
- Shoot if town ordinances permit.
- To prevent root or bulb-feeding, plant susceptible bulbs, tubers or other plants in hardware-cloth enclosures.

## Coyotes

- Don't feed family dogs outdoors; remove bird feeders, which concentrate coyotes' prey.
- Enclose coops for domestic rabbits, chickens. Keep an eye on small domestic pets.
- Don't allow coyotes to approach house: scare them off with loud noises, turn hose on them if they come in close.
- Shoot if town ordinances permit, or hire a licensed trapper.\*

## Deer

- Hang small soap bars still in wrappers at “deer height” (waist to shoulder and up).
- Spray crops and susceptible ornamental plants with *Hinder* in spring and summer, and *Deeraway Big Game Repellent* or *Deer-Off* during dormant periods.
- Run an electric fence around the area to be protected, 30-36 inches high. The key is to bait with peanut butter smeared on pieces of tinfoil that’s attached to the fence every 20 feet.
- Strong wire or wooden fences eight feet high.
- Pyrotechnics, like scare-guns, used correctly. Notify neighbors and local police department before using.

## Honeybees (buzzing around bird feeders, barbecue grills, etc.)

- Locate shallow containers of sugar water (with twigs floating on top for perches) far from home’s entrance.

## Moles

- Try coexistence: Rake excavated dirt smooth, tamp down elevated tunnels in grass.
- Lethal trapping, grub control and other popular control methods have limited success.

## Porcupines

- Shoot or use protective barriers to exclude.
- Lure with pile of salt & apples to shoot if ordinances permit.
- Hire a licensed trapper.\*
- Apply capsaicin sprays to susceptible plants. (Capsaicin is the compound that makes hot peppers hot.)

## Raccoons

- Apply *capsaicin* spray to ears just before corn begins ripening.
- Fence out with two or three strand electric fence, with strands at 4” and 8” high. Keep down vegetation so system won’t short out.

## Skunks

- If skunks are digging under buildings, fence them out using hardware cloth attached to the foundation and bent outwards into an L-shape, buried a foot below ground.
- Hire a licensed trapper.\*
- Remove food attractants, bird feeders and garbage.

## Snakes

- Close snakes out from underneath steps and porches with hardware cloth.
- Eliminate wood piles near the house.
- Remove shrubs and mulch around house; if snakes are numerous, consider removing stone walls.

*Preying on insects and rodents, snakes are beneficial helpers in the home environment. The timber rattler is the only species of poisonous snake that inhabits New Hampshire and it has been found in only three remote mountainous locations. This species is endangered and therefore protected.*

## **Squirrels (invading house walls)**

- Remove any branches overhanging home, porch, attached garage; remove bird feeders.
- “Squirrel-proof” home by sealing all possible entry points with hardware cloth, or install one-way doors to rid home of squirrels.
- Do not seal homes during nesting period. Flying squirrels bear two litters a year, the first in late February, the second in mid-July. Young are not weaned for 12 weeks, after which they begin to venture outside.
- Trap in lethal rat traps, baited with fruit or peanut butter.

## **Voles**

- Prevent damage to ornamental crops by enclosing bulbs, corms and other susceptible perennials in hardware cloth “baskets” when planting.
- Trap in mouse traps baited with fruit or peanut butter.

## **Woodchucks**

- Gas cartridges, shooting and lethal trapping are legal ways to kill woodchucks.
- Don’t use gas cartridges under buildings; they may cause a fire.
- May be deterred by wire fencing extending down a foot into the ground and bent outward at a right angle for one foot. For added deterrence, bend top of fence down and outward, and/or add a strand of electric wire on the outside, eight to 10 inches high.

*\* Get the names of licensed trappers or wildlife rehabilitators by calling Cooperative Extension’s Education Center & Information Line (1-877-398-4769, weekdays, 9a.m. - 2 p.m.) or Wildlife Services (223-6832, weekdays, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.).*

Wildlife Services (223-6832) always has wildlife biologists on tap to provide professional advice about human-wildlife conflicts. They can recommend, or occasionally even lend, special equipment for scaring or deterring nuisance wildlife.

*Note: Mention of a specific product does not constitute an endorsement of that product by UNH Cooperative Extension, nor does failure to include a product imply that product is ineffective.*

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