



# Dealing with wildlife in your backyard

City of Monrovia  
Department of Public Works, Park Division



**W**ildlife can be found throughout urban areas, especially in residential areas along the foothills. Many people choose foothill communities for this reason while others are unaware about their wild neighbors. Good intentions as well as simple neglect may jeopardize the lives of wild animals. This brochure is intended to help people better understand the benefits of wildlife, and give tips on ways to co-exist and reduce conflict with the animals.

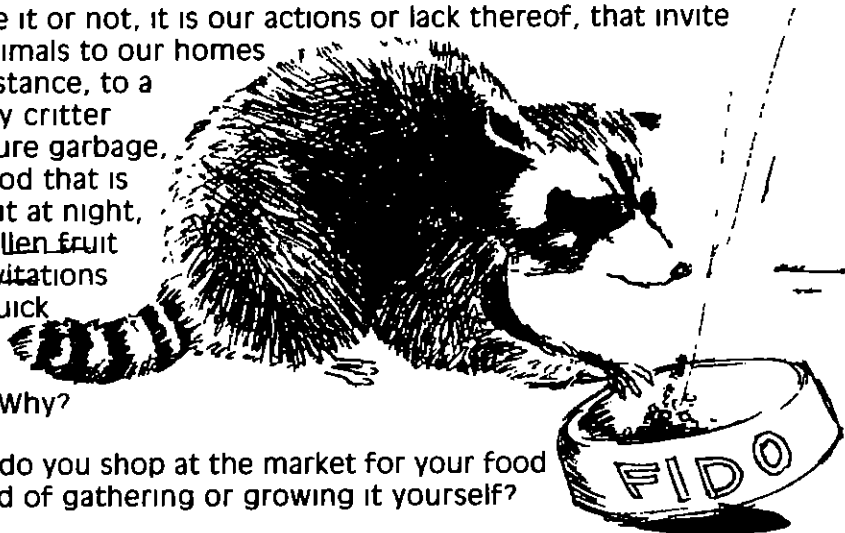
- ◆ Understanding why wildlife are visiting you
- ◆ Preventing wildlife from moving in
- ◆ Removing wildlife from your home
- ◆ Solving specific wildlife problems
- ◆ Co-existing with wildlife can be beneficial

## **U**nderstanding why wildlife are visiting you

In order to understand why certain wildlife have chosen to make stops in your yard, you first need to think like a wild animal. A wild animal's life is one of competition and survival. There are only three basic things that animals need in order to survive: Food, water and shelter. Without these things an animal's time on this earth will be short-lived. Whether you believe it or not, it is our actions or lack thereof, that invite the animals to our homes.

For instance, to a hungry critter unsecured garbage, pet food that is left out at night, and fallen fruit are invitations to a quick and easy meal. Why?

Why do you shop at the market for your food instead of gathering or growing it yourself?



It's easier and we have been raised to do it this way. So have the animals. Animals learn where to find quick and easy meals and teach their children the same techniques. For example, a raccoon, which has learned the use of a dog door and understands from investigating that a bowl of dog or cat food sits right inside, will take advantage of this lucky break. When her young begin to gather their own food, she will show them how this magic door works and what treats lie beyond it.

Bears also teach their young where and what to eat. A mother bear that has learned the art of garbage raiding will teach her young to be trash bears also. Unfortunately for bears, this form of gathering food often leads to their death due to confrontation with a human, malnutrition, or ingested chemicals or plastics. Do humans have a responsibility in this? Absolutely, because it is our actions or lack thereof, that indirectly teach animals these bad habits.

Understanding why an animal is coming to visit your home can help not only you but also the health and well being of the wildlife as well.

### **The things to look for:**

- ◆ **Is there a food source available in my yard?**  
This is not always easy to see. Skunks, opossums and raccoons make meals out of the insects they find around your house, making these animals beneficial to have as neighbors.
- ◆ **Is there a water source available?**  
Swimming pool, Jacuzzi, pond, bowls for pets.
- ◆ **Can shelter be found?**  
Cracks or holes in foundations of building, attics, woodpiles, etc.

## **P**reventing wildlife from moving in

The best way to deal with wildlife passing through, foraging for food or taking up residence is to prevent it. This does

take some effort and a little bit of money but it is much more costly and time consuming to remove an animal and fix the damage. A basic reward system drives wildlife. If an animal is rewarded with food, water or shelter in your yard, it will tend to make repeat visits. If the reward is removed the animal will then seek out another more suitable place that meets its needs. Also, keep in mind that in some cases you are dealing with the food chain. For example, if your goal is to rid your yard of the potential of rattlesnakes visiting, you must focus your attention on mice, rats and squirrels.

### Try the following actions to prevent wildlife visits:

#### Buildings

- ◆ Repair any damaged ventilation screens along the attic and crawl space of the house or garage
- ◆ Make sure that your crawl space cover fits tightly to the opening
- ◆ Seal all openings around pipes, cables, wires, etc (snakes can easily fit through a 1/2 inch wide crack)
- ◆ Screen all roof and chimney vents
- ◆ Seal or screen opening under overlapping roof lines
- ◆ Weather-strip doors including the garage door so that they fit tightly
- ◆ Close area around decks, hot tubs and sheds
- ◆ Place a rat guard on above-ground utility lines

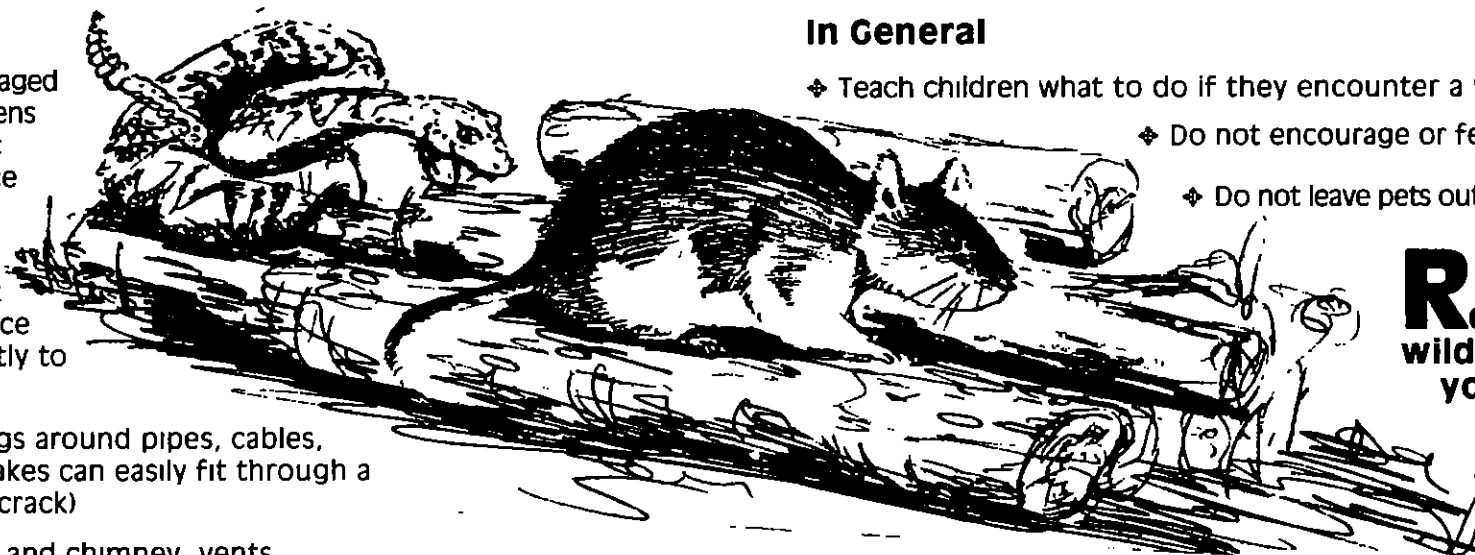
#### Yards

- ◆ Remove dense brush to reduce hiding places
- ◆ Trim bushes and trees at least 6 inches up from the ground
- ◆ Stack woodpiles on platforms at least 10 inches off the ground
- ◆ Do not leave pet food or water out overnight

- ◆ Trim trees away from rooftops to reduce access or place metal guards 18 inches or wider around trees at least five to six feet from the ground
- ◆ Keep all garbage cans covered and secure from tipping over
- ◆ Do not allow trash to accumulate
- ◆ Harvest and pick up dropped fruit
- ◆ Landscape with deer resistant plants
- ◆ Keep compost heaps as far away from your home as possible
- ◆ Install motion sensed lights

#### In General

- ◆ Teach children what to do if they encounter a wild animal
  - ◆ Do not encourage or feed wildlife
  - ◆ Do not leave pets out at night



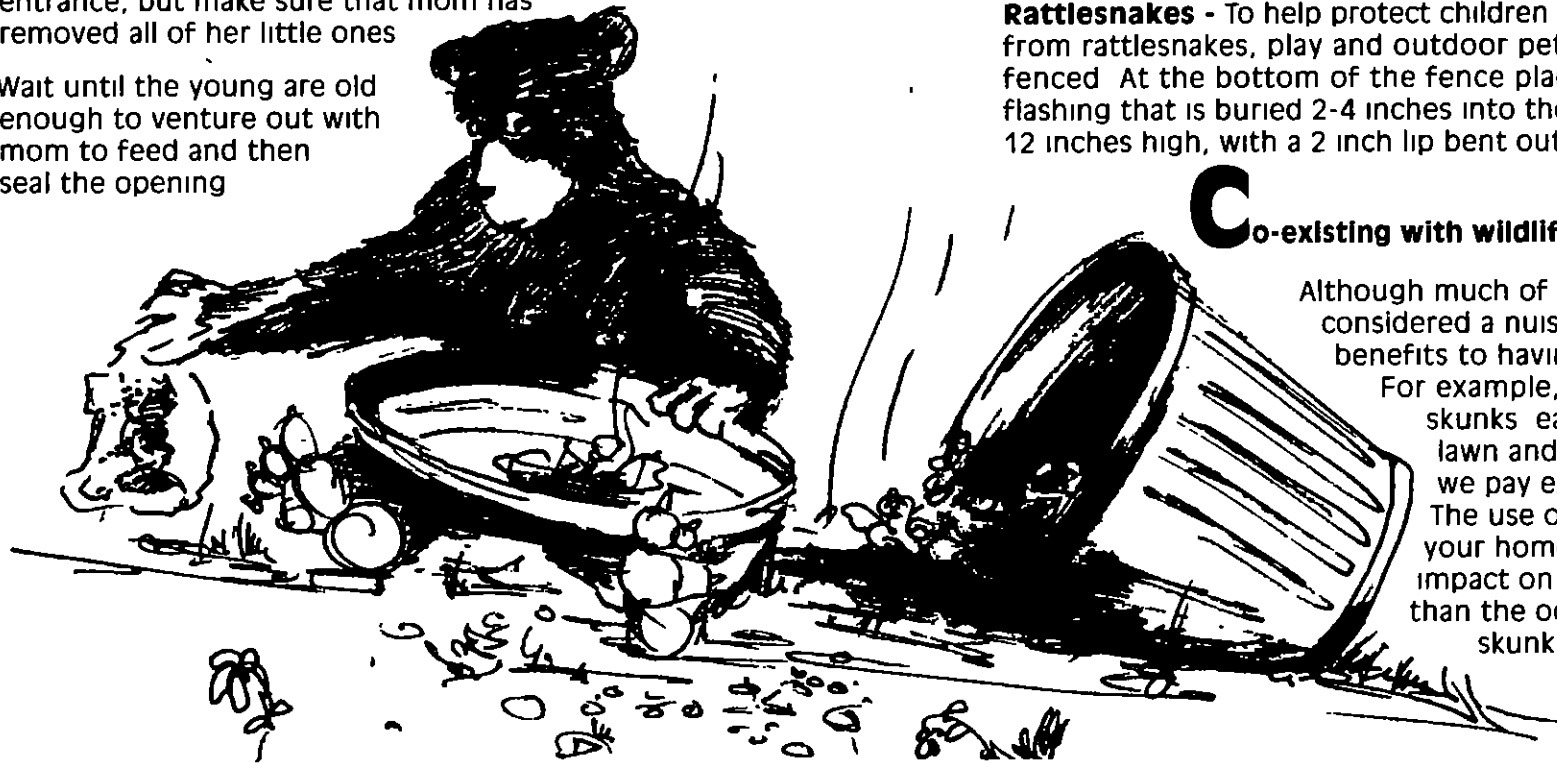
## Removing wildlife from your home

If you already have a critter

living in your house there are a few things to consider. Most people want the animal simply removed. Trapping animals does not fix the problem. If you take for example a family of raccoons out of your attic without following the preventive advice you may in a few weeks have another family move in. Usually when you realize that you have a critter living with you it is due to the whimpering of the young. In this case it is next to impossible to trap all of the family, therefore the family is split often resulting in the death of the young. Although it takes more effort on your part, convincing an animal that your house is not a great place to live is the best option. In this case the mother will voluntarily move the family to a more suitable home. The convincing part is easy, think like a teenager and do all those things that drive parents crazy!

## Convincing an animal to move out:

- ❖ Locate any and all possible entrances to the den whether in the attic or under the house
- ❖ Seal all but one of the entrances and have on hand the materials to seal it when the animals move out
- ❖ Place mothballs, moth crystals, bleach or ammonia inside the attic or crawl space. The smell will bother animals' sensitive noses, be careful because it may also bother yours
- ❖ Place a small radio in the attic or in the room of the house immediately above or below the den. Turn up the rock and roll music
- ❖ Direct a bright light into the area, this works especially well for skunks
- ❖ Place a layer of flour outside the entrance area and watch for tracks to appear
- ❖ Wait to see the tracks lead out. It is time to seal up the entrance, but make sure that mom has removed all of her little ones
- ❖ Wait until the young are old enough to venture out with mom to feed and then seal the opening



## Solving specific wildlife problems:

Often times people co-exist rather well with wildlife until some specific damage is caused such as the devouring of their prize roses

**Deer eating the flowers** - Sprinkle baby powder on the buds, flowers and petals. When the deer eats from it, the taste will be bitter and the deer will move on taking you off the list of fine dining

**Bear visits** - The main attractants for bears are unsecured garbage, fruit trees and swimming pools. Keep garbage inside the garage until the morning of trash day, harvest and pick up fallen fruit, and install motion sensor lights around the pool. The key to stopping bear visits is to take away the reward and make it stressful anytime the bear comes around. Make loud metallic noises, throw a string of aluminum cans out the back door, throw tennis balls or base balls at it. They do not like confrontation and need continuous reminders that people are not fun to be around.

**Rattlesnakes** - To help protect children and the family dog from rattlesnakes, play and outdoor pet areas should be fenced. At the bottom of the fence place an aluminum flashing that is buried 2-4 inches into the ground, at least 12 inches high, with a 2 inch lip bent outwards.

## Co-existing with wildlife can be beneficial.

Although much of the wildlife may be considered a nuisance, there are benefits to having wildlife around.

For example, opossums and skunks eat many of the home, lawn and garden pests that we pay exterminators to kill. The use of chemicals around your home has a much greater impact on your family's health than the occasional odor of skunk spray.

**Raccoons** - Raccoons eat mice, rats, squirrels, gophers, moles, grubs, worms and a variety of insects

**Skunks** - Skunks eat mice, rats, gophers, moles, aphids, grubs, beetles, yellow jackets, grasshoppers, cutworms, rattlesnakes, black widow spiders, cockroaches, snails, etc

**Opossums** - Opossums, also known as "Nature's Little Sanitation Engineers," eat carrion, over-ripe fruit, mice, rats, cockroaches, crickets, beetles, snails and slugs

**Snakes** - Snakes eat only live prey such as rats, mice, squirrels, gophers and moles

Some people enjoy sharing their yard with wildlife. It can be a great joy to watch a deer graze on your lawn or foxes play in the moonlight. Just make sure that you are not attracting wildlife to your yard. Feeding wildlife can lead to overpopulation, malnutrition, disease and starvation.

## **S**ick or Injured Wildlife

If you find an animal that appears sick or injured, do not try to pick it up as the animal will try to defend itself from you. If possible, place a cardboard box over the animal to relieve the stress of the situation and call wildlife officials.

Department of Fish and Game Dispatch 24 hours  
Sacramento (916) 445-0045 M-F, 8 00 a m - 5 00 p m  
Chino Office (909) 597-9823

San Gabriel Valley Humane Society (626) 286-1159

**For additional information contact** Monrovia Canyon Park  
(626) 256-8282

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### **Monrovia Canyon Park Mission Statement**

To preserve Monrovia Canyon Park in its natural state in order that the public will have an opportunity to experience the beauty and solitude of nature

To foster an appreciation, understanding and respect for nature through education

To provide a safe, attractive and peaceful recreation environment compatible with the natural area



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