nest. In fact, rabbit nests are often in the open so the female can see some distance for approaching danger. The mother rabbit has to eat and she only visits the nest to nurse the young. She does not do this when everyone is watching. Also, don't routinely walk to the nest to *"check it out"*, you leave a scent trail which every raccoon, fox, opossum, dog and cat can easily use to find a quick snack. Please do not take in the young ones to raise, they are very difficult, their chances of survival when released are slim and it is against the law!

4) Young rabbits leave the nest and are on their own quite early. So if you see *"baby"* rabbits in your yard that are about fist size, fully furred, and their eyes are open. Leave them alone, they'll be fine.

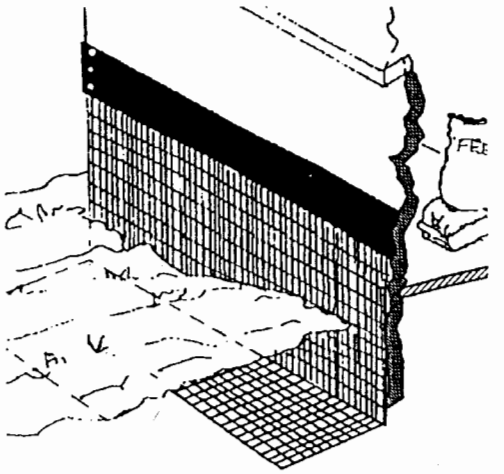
5) Baby birds leave the nest before they can fly, so finding one on the ground does not necessarily mean it is abandoned. Especially, if its eyes are open, has some adult feathers, and attempts short flights of a few feet. The parents feed these fledglings on the ground until they are strong enough to fly up to low trees and shrubs. The parents don't usually show up when you are in the area. So, leave them there, they are probably fine. Also keep your dog or cat away and under control until they are gone (usually in a couple of days).

6) Have raccoon babies in your fire place? See #2 in the *"Prevention Section"*.

7) Squirrel's nesting in the attic, chewing on the insulation and making all kinds of racket? See #3 in the *"Prevention Section"*.

8) How do you keep critters out of your garden? Well, you can't always, but fencing your garden is probably the most effective way. You can try moth balls, blood meal, human hair and owl decoys, but results are mixed. Good fencing seems to be the trick.

9) Critters under your deck? It's much easier to prevent this than to deal with the problem. Skunks (and most other hole diggers like woodchucks) like to dig at the edge or the corner of something. You can go a long way toward discouraging them by fencing the following way:



Place the hardware cloth six inches beneath the ground surface. Extend it out away from the base of your deck, tool shed foundation or other applicable structure by at least three feet. Most critters will prefer to dig right next to the structure and when they can't get through the hardware cloth, they will go somewhere else. The hardware cloth can then be covered with lattice work, or other cosmetic treatments, to improve appearances.

For further information call:

Troy Police Department
Animal Control
524-3477

Lloyd A Stage
Outdoor Education Center
524-3567

Living With Your Wildlife Neighbors

Common Questions & Solutions For Homeowners

City of Troy

Police Department
Animal Control Division

in conjunction with the

Parks & Recreation Department's
Lloyd A. Stage
Outdoor Education Center

URBAN WILDLIFE

Suburban dwellers sometimes have a love/hate relationship with wildlife. Feeding and watching wildlife is the second most popular outdoor related pastime in America, gardening is first. On the other hand, people do run into problems with wildlife as well. We are happy to see them until they nest in our fireplace or tear into our trash.

Suburban dwellers have the misconception that in urban and suburban areas, wildlife cannot survive, that they have no place to go and that is why they nest in our attics, decks, and garages. While it is true that urban and suburban areas have greatly diminished habitat for many species of wildlife, truth be told, there are quite a few that thrive here. Raccoons, squirrels, cotton-tailed rabbits, opossums, skunks, woodchucks, mallard ducks, Canada geese, fox and white-tailed deer can all be found in the City of Troy. They have adapted to or have found the modifications we have made to the area quite to their liking.

Conflicts arise when wildlife try to go about their business in the same place we try to go about ours. Geese on the golf course, raccoons in our fireplace, skunks under our deck. These places all provide very good requirements for wildlife. Your chimney and fireplace makes a dandy, sturdy hollow tree for a raccoon. Your deck provides cover from predators and is an excellent hidden entrance for a skunk's den. Mowed grass provides excellent food for geese, who are natural grazers. If this grass is next to water, the other thing that geese require, so much the better.

PREVENTION IS THE KEY

Most of these problems can be dealt with quite effectively. Many "wildlife problems" are really "people problems". Prevention is the key to dealing with these wildlife nuisances and is the best all around solution to the problem both for people and wildlife. After prevention comes a series of solutions which are much more work and not nearly as satisfactory.

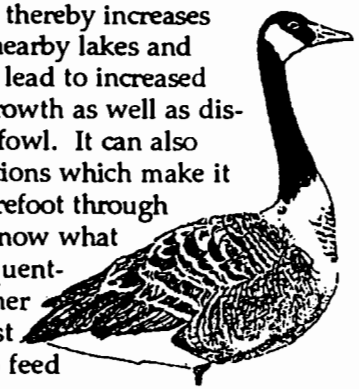
Here, then, are some points and pointers to help allow people and wildlife to get along a little better. Determine if you are taking these very simple steps which would reduce probably 80% of all wildlife problems we hear about:

1) Make sure your garbage and trash is stored securely. If you keep it outside, fasten the lids on the trash containers (raccoons are powerful critters, screen door springs or bungee cords hooked through one handle, over the lid and hooked on the opposite handle works well.) When its time to put your trash out on the curb, use a can rather than putting out the trash bags alone. If you keep it in your garage, make sure you close the garage.

2) Cap all your chimney outlets to prevent squirrels and raccoons from entering. Take this precaution even if you do not have a fireplace. Birds, in particular, can enter your house through the damper on your furnace.

3) Each fall and spring, inspect the exterior of you home for entrances wildlife can use to get into your attic. Even a raccoon does not need a large hole to enter. Make sure soffit vents and gable end vents are fastened securely. You can attached .25" hardware cloth over the vent on the inside of the attic for extra security. Plug any gaps between your foundations and sill plates.

4) If you feed birds, you will attract other wildlife to your yard area. Be particularly sure you *"critter proof"* your home. In some cases, as with ducks and geese, feeding them only attracts more of them and thereby increases nutrient loads in nearby lakes and streams. This can lead to increased weed and algae growth as well as disease among waterfowl. It can also cause nasty conditions which make it difficult to run barefoot through the grass, if you know what we mean. Consequently, for this and other reasons, it's against City ordinances to feed geese or ducks.



CRITTER QUERIES AND PROBLEMS

Here are some other typical wildlife situations we often hear about.

1) Skunks digging in your yard doesn't indicate a skunk problem, it indicates an insect problem in your lawn. Sod webworm and other larvae are abundant and the skunks are taking care of the problem for you, since they eat lots of insects. You may want to call the Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service or your local garden center and inquire what is the safest and most environmentally friendly way of managing your insect problem.

2) Woodpeckers drumming on your house's wooden siding? If it sounds like a drum roll, don't worry, it won't damage your siding, the drum roll is the woodpecker's song to defend a territory and attract a mate. If, however, they are tapping and chiseling away wood, you likely do not have a woodpecker problem but insects living in or under your wooden siding (and could be causing damage). Once again, consult someone in helping you control the insects.

3) Found a rabbit's nest in the middle of the yard and the mother is no where to be seen? Please, do not assume the nest is abandoned! Rabbits make their nests in some unusual places and unlike birds, rabbits don't have to sit on the