Living with Urban Wildlife
Wild animals explore, sniff, and climb about in a variety of places, from remote forest and desert habitats to the noisy, hard-edged confines of bustling cities. They are clever beings who may dine on such natural fare as frogs, crayfish, rats, mice, roaches, birds’ eggs, and wild fruit. They are also content to enjoy a delectable dinner scrounged from the rich variety of “leftovers” found in city and suburban settings. But the city is not a Garden of Eden for wildlife. Their natural desire to dine upon what is available and to take up seemingly suitable housing can earn them the undeserved wrath of humans who unintentionally provide the food and housing in the first place. Wildlife can’t cause problems unless people allow them to do so. Instead of blaming them we should work together to find solutions satisfactory to both humans and the wildlife who grace our neighborhoods.

Check and Secure:
*Exclusion techniques should not be implemented until you are absolutely certain that ALL ANIMALS are out of the space to be blocked off. If young are present, please wait until they are old enough for their mother to walk them out and then secure entry points.* Otherwise, the young will starve and then you will have other unpleasant problems to solve. The babies will begin to go out with mom after just a few weeks.
**WILDLIFE SEEKING SHELTER**

It is natural for wildlife to seek shelter (just as humans do). Caves, hollow logs, and large abandoned birds’ nests suffice in the wild, but in the city the substitutes are attics, crawl spaces, or chimneys. After securing these areas, pay close attention during the day as well as at night for any sounds of scratching or whining. This would indicate that an animal has been trapped inside and you will need to immediately give the animal an exit.

Don’t panic. Think rationally and remember to ask yourself:

- Who could be trapped?
- Where is their den and how did they get in?
- Could there be a mother with babies?
- What hours do they keep as they go about their daily and nightly affairs?

**SECURE GARBAGE**

The two most effective and humane solutions are to secure your garbage so that you do not attract and feed wildlife and to secure your home so they cannot find convenient shelter.

Garbage cans are to raccoons and opossums what bird feeders are to cardinals and doves. Your garbage can should have a lid that fits tightly. If this isn’t possible, try hooking a bungee cord from one side of the can to the other to secure the lid. Or place a large rock on top of the lid to secure it. Usually raccoons gain entry into garbage cans by tipping them over. For this reason it helps to have the cans stored in racks, or tied in an upright position.

**ATTICS AND CRAWL SPACES**

If a wild animal has gained entrance to an attic or crawl space, close all points of entry excepting one, which should be covered with a thin piece of paper. When the paper has been broken, you will know that the animal has left. Carefully check the attic or crawl space to be sure that no other animals remain and then properly seal the hole. Also check porches, decks, sheds, and garages for holes or weak areas and securely seal them. Regularly check the roof and eaves and block all holes using galvanized sheet metal. On open vents, use rustproof screening. Make sure there are no animals living inside at the time. Keep garage and shed doors shut at night. If an animal goes into a garage or shed, simply leave the door open for a few hours after dark and they will leave.

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AMMONIA AND CAYENNE PEPPER
Make sure the animal has one easy to locate exit. Block all other exits. Obtain six to twelve, one-inch strips of fabric. Tie them in tight knots and soak them in household ammonia. Then, wearing rubber gloves, place these under the house or in the attic, wherever the animal has been seen or heard. Additionally, sprinkle cayenne pepper generously in areas where an animal has been coming and going such as a hole leading under the house or around trees that give the animal access to the attic. Be sure to wear rubber gloves and do not inhale the dust. Animals cannot tolerate the presence of the pepper and they will vacate the area. In addition to ammonia and cayenne pepper, there are a number of non-toxic repellants available for sale online.

SOUND
Most animals can be deterred by certain noises. Playing loud music during the day when nocturnal animals are trying to find quiet places to rest can make your home or attic less desirable. There are also sonic devices which can be placed around your house which will emit a high frequency sound that animals don’t enjoy. This will generally convince animals to move on and find a quieter place to live.

All of us, at one time or another, are probably going to experience the excitement of a visit from local urban wildlife. Although such experiences are wonderful and quite memorable, they can be problematic. Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation has developed these Tips for Living With Urban Wildlife in the hope that, despite continuous urban expansion, human and non-human animals can still find ways to peacefully coexist.