



Laguna Beach Police Department Animal Services

505 Forest Ave. Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Wildlife and You

The tree lined streets, gardens, and ivy-covered fences we find so attractive are also very attractive to local urban wildlife. Urban growth in Southern California has led to the loss and disturbance of hundreds of acres of wildlife habitat. While some wild animals have migrated to quieter, more remote areas, others especially coyotes, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, skunks and rodents have learned to adapt and thrive alongside humans.

Wild animals are most likely to become a nuisance if they are provided with an attractive environment. These attractions include abundant food and water supplies and safe quiet places to rest and bear their young. Effective steps can be taken, however to prevent these animals from making your home their home.

Prevention

Favorite nesting and denning sites for animals include the attic and crawl space under your house. Before an animal moves into your home, take the following preventative measures:

- Check your property regularly to ensure that screens barring entrance to your home and basement are intact. Securely fasten heavy screening or metal hardware cloth over vents, dryer exhaust, and chimney openings. Stuff coarse steel wool into gaps between pipes and outside walls.
- Eliminate access routes by pruning tree any branches that overhang your roof.
- Ivy and other vineing plants not only provide excellent cover for animals but may also act as easy access to your roof eaves and awnings. Keep these types of plants trimmed at least 18 inches from your roof eaves.
- Keep pet doors closed at night and install an inside latch to keep them locked.

Wildlife in your home

If an animal has taken up residence in an attic or crawl space, there are steps that you may take to scare them away.

- Place a radio near the den entrance and play music loudly during the day.
- Place dishes of ammonia soaked rags near the den.
- If you believe that there are young in the den, you may try placing worn T-shirt near the den. Nesting mothers are concerned with the safety of their young and human scent may encourage her to move.

Note: It may take a mother several hours or even days to move her litter depending on its size, make sure that all young have been removed before sealing up all access to the den.

Wildlife on your property

Gardens bearing fruits and vegetables, fishponds and swimming pools provide easy sustenance for wild life. Steps may be taken to wild animals from being on your property.

- To prevent raccoons or other wildlife from digging in your garden, sprinkle cayenne pepper around the perimeter.

- Harvest fruits and vegetables when ripe and clean up any that have fallen onto the ground.
- Soak rags in ammonia or bleach and place them in bowl or tie them in posts in the garden. This should deter uninvited animal visitors from foraging for grubs or insects.
- Some success has been achieved using motion detector lights and sprinkler systems.
- Secure outdoor fishponds with a wooden cover, or horizontally submerge wire mesh around the circumference of the pond. Attach the outside edges of the mesh to the edges of the pond, leaving the inside free. Fish then have the center of the pond to themselves, and animals cannot reach over the wire, because it provides an unstable surface on which to perch.

Protecting your pets

As a rule, urban wildlife is not aggressive, however animals will defend their young and what they consider to be their territory. It's a good idea to keep your pets indoors at night while many animals are out.

Pet rabbits, cats and dogs under 30 lbs. can be at risk to predators like coyotes even in daylight hours. Consider constructing an enclosed dog run or outdoor cattery if you wish your pets to have unsupervised "outdoor" time.

Diseases like rabies and distemper are found in wildlife in our area. It is impotent to keep your pets vaccinations up to date. If you or your pet is bitten or injured by wildlife, obtain appropriate medical care and contact animal services for advice.

If you have pets, bring their food and water indoors at night. Clean up leftover food, seeds, and dropped or discarded fruits and vegetables. Secure trash containers with weighted lids, or secure the lids with straps or chains attached to the handles.

Den Disruption

Active animal nests or dens with babies should only be moved by professionals for health, safety and legal reasons. Inactive dens or active dens with no young in them may be disrupted. Den disruption will make the animal feel unsafe in the area. After a den has been removed, steps should be taken to decrease the appeal of the location as a den site.

Humane Trapping

Humane trapping is a possible solution, however "do-it-yourself" trapping may create as many problems as it solves.

- Relocating a wild animal without a permit is illegal.
- Wild animals become stressed and frantic when trapped and may injure itself or you while trying to escape.
- Trapping may separate mothers from their babies who cannot survive on their own.
- You may be exposed to zoonotic diseases (diseases that can pass from animals to humans).
- Trapping will only be a temporary solution unless steps are taken to discourage wildlife from returning to the area.

It is strongly recommended that before you trap, you contact animal services for advice or referrals to professional trappers.

Please avoid direct contact with wildlife, especially if they seem sick, injured or oddly unafraid.

If you have any questions, please contact Laguna Beach Animal Services at (949) 497-0701