

Do a Good Deed.....Don't Feed

* By feeding wildlife you make them depend on you. They need to continue finding their own food, and teaching their young to do so.

* Feeding wild animals makes them lose their fear of man and will encourage them to come closer to your home and to you. The closer they come, the more likely they are to become a nuisance or to bite you or your pet.

* Animals lured into urban areas are at risk from people who may kill or maim them out of fear, ignorance or cruelty.

* Pet food will attract wild animals. Feed pets inside or only put enough food for your pet to eat at one time and then pick up food dishes immediately.

Stash your Trash ! !

* Put tight lids on trash cans and secure them to prevent tipping. A hinge and lock will help in extreme cases.

* Don't place trash bags outside; they can easily be ripped open. Put plastic trash bags inside trash cans.

* Don't put trash out until the morning of pick up. Keep in garage or closed area until then.

PROTECT PETS ! ! !

- Because they may be appetizing to predators, keep small pets indoors, especially at night.
- Caged animals, such as rabbits, pet rats or birds are an easy mark for larger animals. Rabbit hutches or cages should be placed inside a building or made secure.
- Keep your pets in the house, confined or on a leash. This will minimize chances of your pet having contact with a wild animal.
- Vaccinate your animal against rabies every year.

Snakes, Rabbits and Rodents

* Clear out brush and weeds where rodents and snakes may be hiding. The presence of rodents attracts snakes.

* Build fences or walls deep enough to exclude rabbits and tunneling rodents and high enough to exclude larger animals.

* Do not plant thick ground cover.

* Do not plant creeping vines near buildings because rats and other animals use them for access to roofs and attics.

Who to call

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If you have questions or need assistance with wildlife, contact the Florida Freshwater Fish and Game Commission, or contact a local wildlife rehabilitator or commercial wildlife trapper.

Call Animal Services
at 796-5062
for referrals.

Hernando County Animal Services

Living
with
Wildlife



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Living with Wildlife

Sharing the neighborhood with wildlife is one of the privileges we enjoy. Watching squirrels race up and down the tree trunks or catching sight of a raccoon by night or a deer by day, enriches our lives. Some people, however, object to the presence of wild animals, forgetting that they were here first. Others, with a misguided sense of kindness, contribute to the animals' problems by feeding them.

As we continue to invade the territory of wild animals by building more homes, apartments, and shopping centers, it is important that we do our best to protect these animals. Each of these animals play a vital part in the delicate system of nature's checks and balances.

Here are some time-tested methods for protecting ourselves, our children, and our pets, and for living in harmony with our fellow creatures. Remember, if there is NO food and shelter, most animals will go elsewhere. A simple 18" fence will keep rabbits out of a garden and the closing of all opening and holes around wires and pipes will exclude birds, bats, squirrels and snakes from your home. Once bats, squirrels and other animals are present in an attic, they may be trapped, and after removal by a permitted wildlife trapper, all openings should be closed. Be sure that

there are no babies present.

Setting the Record Straight on Wildlife

- ▶ **Baby animals are rarely abandoned:** Some parent animals spend only a short time daily with their young and often spend many hours each day gathering food. When people approach, the adults will flee momentarily, but will usually return if the baby is left alone.
- ▶ **Young birds out of their nest:** Young birds may accidentally fall from their nest or be pushed out if sick or defective, by the mother. "Nestlings" (few feathers present), if healthy, can be successfully returned to the nest. Mothers will NOT reject their babies because of human scent. "Fledglings" (wing and tail feathers present), normally will leave the nest to attempt flight. If the baby bird is in a safe place, leave it alone. The parents will usually continue to feed these birds. If replaced in the nest, chances are it will jump out again.
- ▶ **Wildlife out during the day:** Wildlife that is out during the day does not necessarily have rabies. Although most wildlife is usually nocturnal, wildlife will come out during the day to search for food and water. As wildlife becomes more accustomed to humans and lose their natural fear, you will see them more often and they will stop and "stare" because they are as curious as we are.

Don't Monkey around with exotic pets !

Wild animals are not meant to be pets. The novelty of owning a lion cub, raccoon or other exotic pet may make the idea appealing, but the results can be devastating. Young animals that seem tame and harmless can become dangerous as they mature. They may turn on you, seemingly without provocation, because they are still.....and always will be.....wild animals. Remember that it took thousands of years to domesticate cats and dogs. It is as unfair to the animals as it is dangerous to you, to attempt to turn him into something he is not. Most zoos will not accept wild animals that have been kept as pets. Also the animal's chance of survival is low if released back into the wild. If you want a pet, shelters are full of wonderful dogs and cats in need of good homes.

It is illegal to possess any wildlife without a valid State Wildlife Permit.

RABIES

Rabies is a contagious, fatal disease to all warm blooded animals, including humans. Nationally, 85% of all rabies cases are caused by wild animals. The leading carriers of rabies are raccoons, bats, skunks and foxes. You cannot tell if a wild animal has rabies by looking at it, a laboratory test is required. Wild animals will come out during the day to hunt for food or water. Seeing a wild animal during the day does not necessarily mean that it has rabies. If a wild animal is eating or drinking this is a good indication that it is healthy. Follow some of these tips for coping with troublesome wildlife. Live-Trapping and removal should always be a last resort, because removing healthy wildlife encourages others to move in.

LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH: Precautions

- If you see injured wildlife on your property don't touch it, call for assistance.
- Avoid all wild animals.
- Teach children not to handle or pet any wildlife.
- Just as you would keep wild animals away from your home, you should not invade theirs. Wild animals have their own place in nature and you have to respect their homes.
- Do not keep wild animals as pets.