



Aspen Valley
Wildlife Sanctuary

Living With Wildlife

A guide to co-existing with
wildlife in cottage country



Inside:

Backyard bears?

**A mouse in your
house?**

**Raccoons in the
chimney?**

**A skunk under
your deck?**

AND MORE

Black Bears

Did you know?

A black bear's diet is primarily vegetarian?

Although black bears are omnivores, plant foods make up the majority of a bear's diet - comprising up to 90%. Preferred foods include berries, nuts, greens, insects and meat.

Black bears are peaceful creatures that normally shy away from people?

New born bear cubs are little bigger than a chipmunk?

Born in late January or early February while their mother is hibernating, cubs will weigh between 1/2 to 1 lb (200-500 grams)!



Bears in Your Backyard?

Natural foods vary greatly in abundance from year to year. Shortage of food and reduction of habitat will bring bears into areas of human habitation where food or garbage around homes, cottages and campsites become attractive to them. To keep them out of your backyard is simple - clean up after yourself! Since bears become habituated to available food sources it may take several days for the bear to move on after the attractant is removed.

Try this!

Store garbage in steel bear-proof containers if possible or alternatively in airtight containers secured inside a storage area not to be put out until the day of pick-up. Keep containers clean.

Freeze meat scraps until garbage pick-up day.

Rinse cans and bottles well for recycling and also store in a secured area (do not leave sharp edges on cans).

Clean up outdoor grills after use.

Keep pet food in at night.

Cover compost well with soil and leaves (if unwanted guests still visit – stop composting).

Never compost meat, dairy products or sweet food.

Ensure bird feeders are animal proof and can not spill to the ground.

Feed birds only in late fall to mid April.

Beavers

Did you know?

Beavers make an essential contribution to our natural environment?

The ponds they build provide a healthy freshwater habitat for many other living creatures and a source of food and water for wildlife that visit.

Beaver dams prevent flooding and erosion by slowing rapidly flowing water?

Beaver dams also prevent water runoff and the water contained provides a readily available supply that replenishes groundwater in times of drought.

Beavers are excellent forest managers?

Beavers usually fell fast growing deciduous trees, preferably aspen as well as willow, white birch or alder. A beaver will take these trees from the water's edge allowing sunlight through and space for the longer living trees to grow.



HELP

A Beaver in the boathouse?

Periodically a beaver may move into a boathouse. You have provided a dark, quiet place for them to move into.

Try This!

Scatter mothballs and wash areas with bleach. When the beaver has left, seal off vulnerable areas with wire fencing. When you leave the cottage for the winter, sink fencing across the boat access. Leave mothballs or other non-toxic, offensive smelling material.

A Beaver is cutting down your trees?

Try this!

Although beavers do not often harm "valuable" hardwoods (such as maple or oak) you may wish to protect a specific tree, encircle it with 2" X 4" X 3' heavy wire fencing – leaving a 6" space between wire and the tree trunk. Anchor firmly.

To control the water level in your pond why not build a beaver baffle? For details check our website - see the back cover for details.

Mice

Did you know?

Mice form the largest group of seed distributors in the forest, planting trees in forgotten caches and spreading minute herb pits and mushroom spores in their droppings?

Mouse droppings fertilize the soil, while their tunnels help air, water and roots spread through the ground.

Mouse Proof!

- Rinse all empty bottles and jars and store them **upside down**.
- Dry goods, candles and soap should be kept in glass or metal containers with tight lids.
- Root vegetables should be kept in a rodent-proof cupboard or refrigerator.
- Trapping alone is not an effective method of rodent control. Unless access points are closed up, more animals will continue to move in.
- Poisons result in a lingering, inhumane death with much suffering and will have the same effects on other animals – including pets.
- Glue boards should **never** be used as they cause immense suffering from suffocation, dehydration, injury or stress.

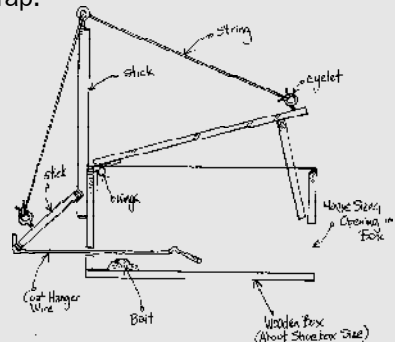
A Mouse in the House?

Mice have adapted very successfully to living in close proximity to humans and are regular visitors to cottages and camps. Because they can squeeze through the smallest of entry points, extra effort must be taken to keep them out.

Try this!

Quick dry cement is best for sealing holes on the outside of buildings. Six mm metal screening should be placed over vents, under open porches and sheds. Steel wool can be used around pipes in the kitchen, bathroom and basement. Nail sheet metal over cracks. All openings for water pipes, electric wire, telephone cables, sewer pipes, drain sprouts and vents must be sealed. Doors and windows must be tight fighting. Plastic sheeting or screening, caulking and wood are unsuitable, as mice will chew through them.

For a humane method of mouse removal, try our home made live trap:



Raccoons

Did you know?

A raccoon has front paws much like small human hands?

These “hands” are very sensitive and driven by a keen curiosity, raccoons often locate their food entirely with their sense of touch. They are skilled at opening doors, latches, jars and are adept at getting into almost any garbage can regardless of the devices designed to keep them out! Properly store and secure your garage!

Raccoons are very adaptable creatures that thrive in a diversity of habitats?

Raccoons are extremely bright creatures that have compensated for human encroachment into natural areas by moving back into our neighbourhoods where food and shelter is often readily available. As omnivores, raccoons will eat just about anything!

A raccoon family in the chimney?

Raccoons like dark, warm places with small entrance holes. Although they do not hibernate, raccoons will curl up in a den (e.g. a tree cavity, hollowed log or even an attic or chimney) throughout harsh winter weather. Raccoon babies are born in April or May in the winter den. For the first ten weeks, the mother will leave her young as she forages for food on her nightly journeys. If she is away too long, the kits may whimper or whine when they become hungry. Often a first clue to their presence in or around the cottage.

Try This!

If a raccoon family has moved into your premises – it is best to wait out baby season. After ten weeks, the kits will join their mother on evening jaunts and eventually the family will move on. After this time, you can close up any points of entry. Uncapped chimneys, openings into attics, rotting roofs and loose shingles are all invitations for wildlife to move into buildings.

A disturbance such as a radio playing or a light source will cause the mother to take her babies elsewhere. However, only when the mother and her kits have been seen coming outside should a cottage/home owner begin to encourage them to leave and repair the entrance area. Separating a mother raccoon from her young will result in their slow and inhumane death. Furthermore, a mother separated from her young will do considerable damage trying to get them.

*Never light a fire in an attempt to smoke animals out of a chimney, as this is inhumane and very dangerous.



Skunks

Did you know?

Skunks are one of the most commonly misunderstood of wild animals?

When treated with respect and granted appropriate space, they are gentle, harmless creatures.

Skunks are members of the weasel family?

All members of this family have musk glands used for marking territory and attracting mates. Skunk musk is so strong that it evolved as a perfect defense mechanism. However, a skunk does not spray without reason and will provide ample warning before doing so. When threatened a skunk will lift its tail, stamp its feet, arch its back and growl. If the message was not understood, as a last resort the skunk will turn its back end toward its antagonist, flip up its tail and spray.



A skunk under the deck?

Skunks have adapted to a wide variety of habitats and food sources. They prefer open areas, thick brush and forest edges over dense forest habitats. They may choose to live under foundations, porches, decks, sheds or a woodpile. In the winter skunks usually find hollow logs or groundhog holes, or dig burrows to nestle down in.

Try this!

To close off an entry hole under a porch, deck or shed, dig a trench around the perimeter. Place galvanized steel screening (1" X 1") into the trench bending it outward at the bottom, and fill in the trench. Leave an opening large enough to allow the animals to get out. To monitor when the animals leave, place a barrier such as a large ball of paper or soil in the exit hole. Check the opening after sunset to determine if the barrier has been removed. Check for footprints.

Ensure that all the animals have gone before closing an entry hole permanently. Place a bit of food inside the hole so that only an animal inside could get it. Cover the hole with wire mesh so that it can be removed to check the food or if an animal is left inside. If the food remains untouched for several days you have been successful.

Do not attempt to remove skunks in the winter or spring. Babies are born in May and will be at least eight weeks of age before they are seen out with their mother.

Squirrels

Did you know?

Squirrels in the Attic?

Red and eastern grey squirrels are intelligent, curious creatures that are adaptable to a variety of habitats. Squirrels may take up residence in your home or cottage and are invited in by dark, warm places with small entrance holes to nest such as an attic, roof or shed. Entrance holes can be small as a golf ball.

Try This!

Babies are born and raised between March and May and then again between August and October. When babies are fully mobile and seen coming outside for food you may encourage squirrels to move out with the use of battery-operated lights and radios. Relocating squirrels is not a viable option as once you remove one, another will move in. Once the squirrels are mature and mobile during the day, close all entry points (including eaves, vents and fascia board at corners) and offer an alternative – put up a squirrel house!

Tips:

Keep shingles and eaves in good condition.

Screen bathroom, stove and other vents and attic openings with heavy, 1" by 1" wire.

Trim branches that overhang buildings and remove unused TV towers.

Squirrels are nature's own tree planters?

Since squirrels often store more food than they need, and do not always remember all of their hiding places, squirrels contribute to reforestation by scattering seeds that will take root in a new location.

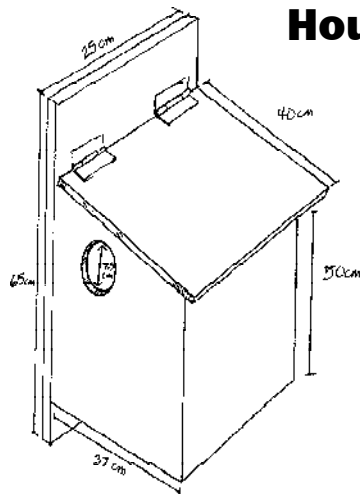
A squirrel nest is called a drey?

Grey or red squirrels generally build their nests high up in trees, in hollow trunks or forks between thick branches. Although they do not hibernate, they will spend long hours in their nests during winter.

Red squirrels will stockpile food in one or more central locations, where as grey squirrels will bury a nut or two at a time dispersed over a wider area?

A sure sign of red squirrels nearby is a large store of pine cones, nuts and fungi.

A Squirrel House



Problem Solving

Wild animals that come into contact with humans are merely seeking food or shelter. Do not provide these opportunities if you do not wish to encourage them. Please be respectful and patient should conflicts arise. Remember that we have come into their world and are asking them to share.

A Few Things to Remember:

- **Never** attempt to corner or capture a wild animal!
- **Do not disturb wild animals when they have young.** Know the life cycle of the animal you wish to remove to ensure that mothers are not separated from babies.
- Before closing any entry hole to your residence permanently, be sure you are around the following few days to monitor for noises that indicate animals are trapped inside.
- Do not use chicken wire to block entry points as it can stretch and an animal could get its head caught in it.
- Live trapping and re-locating an animal is not a long-term solution. The removal of individual animals, without eliminating access to shelter or food, will just leave space for another animal to move into. Most wild animals are territorial, so relocating them may create problems elsewhere.
- Animals should be encouraged to leave your premises on their own with minimal disturbance.
- If the situation warrants removal of the animal from a building – seek the assistance of experts who employ humane removal techniques and release the animal on site.

With a little understanding humans and wild animals can co-exist peacefully. Sit back, relax and enjoy wildlife at the cottage!

For more information on wildlife or the work of the Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, visit our web site at: www.aspenvalleywildlifesanctuary.com

