

Introduction

One of the Bay Area's greatest assets is its abundance of woodland, grassland and wetland habitats. Many wildlife species live in close proximity to their human neighbors as housing development expands in our region. We invite you to take a few minutes to read about some of the common wildlife species found in Contra Costa County and several things you can do to get along with these original "residents" of your neighborhood.



How To Be Wildlife Friendly

There are a few important steps to take to keep a healthy distance between your family and wildlife in the neighborhood. Following these tips helps to make wild animals welcome guests rather than pests.

- Keep garbage in tightly covered containers and pick up fallen fruit from fruit trees. Without the smells associated with food stuffs from our houses and gardens, animals are much less likely to create nuisances in our yards.
- Do not leave pet food or water out in your yard. Close pet doors at night to keep wild animals outside.
- Maintain bird feeders by collecting fallen and discarded seeds which attract rats, squirrels and other wildlife.
- Keeping cats indoors will protect them from disease and predators, as well as to help conserve native songbirds, lizards, salamanders and other small animals. Several sources, including the Audubon Society, report that free-roaming cats have devastating effects on native animals.
- Close or screen entrances to attics, vents and crawl spaces, and areas under sheds and decks so animals cannot use those areas to sleep, den or breed.
- If deer are a problem in your area, plant "deer resistant" plants recommended by your local nursery.
- If raccoons or skunks are digging in your lawn, you may have a grub (insect larvae that eat grass roots) problem. Watering the lawn in the morning rather than the evening will make the lawn more difficult to dig and keep grubs deeper in the soil during the evening hours. Heavy grub infestations should be treated with the minimum amount of toxic substances. Ask your local nursery about beneficial nematodes for grub control.
- Use black or cayenne pepper on the lawn to discourage wildlife from digging. Dog and cat repellent may work as well.
- Let native wildlife stay wild. Although well intentioned, feeding wildlife disrupts natural behaviors and can reduce long-term survival.
- Do not handle wildlife. This can harm animals and expose you to disease.