




The **World** is bigger
than your **B** **ckyard**

Inland Valley Humane Society & S.P.C.A.



Urban wildlife is an important part of our environment. The Inland Valley Humane Society & S.P.C.A. does not advocate trapping, removal, relocation or eradication of healthy wildlife. Wildlife experts agree that removing these creatures from the urban environment creates a hole in the ecosystem for other similar animals to fill. Relocation to other areas is not recommended because it is generally a death sentence for the animal being introduced, and it may spread parasites or diseases to the animals already living there. The Humane Society encourages the public to learn more about wildlife and appreciate its existence.



GRAZERS

Grazers (herbivores) are attracted to the plantings on landscaped properties. Deer are the most common grazers in our service cities.

CONFLICTS

- In urban habitats, deer may graze through landscaped yards.
- At times they are involved in traffic accidents.

DETERRENTS

- To exclude deer from your yard, erect a 6–8 foot fence made of high-tensile wire or mesh netting.
- To discourage nibbling in your yard, stake out the restricted area with bamboo sticks. String a line of twine around the perimeter one foot off the ground so that the animals cannot move into the restricted area.

To protect individual plants:

- Buy a commercial repellent available at plant nurseries.
- Check with your nursery for plants that are distasteful to deer to use in your yard.



GRAZERS

DEER

{*Odocoileus hemionus*}

Deer are common throughout our foothill communities. They have adapted to the landscaped yards of our urban environment and may browse on the plants in and around your yard.

Appearance

Deer are large, hoofed animals. The males of the species grow antlers which are discarded and regrow each year. All deer are “grazers,” feeding on shoots and leaves of woody plants during early morning and evening hours or in the moonlight.

Behavior

The males (bucks) may become more aggressive during the fall breeding season. Young deer (fawns) may be left alone for several hours while their mothers forage for food, so do not remove a fawn from its surroundings. If you are concerned about a fawn’s well-being, contact your local humane society or wildlife center.



GRAZERS



DIGGERS & SQUATTERS

Skunks, raccoons and opossums are our most common wildlife neighbors and can be found throughout each of our service cities. Any of these animals may be responsible for digging in lawns and flowerbeds for grubs and ground-dwelling insects. In addition, they may take advantage of open crawlspaces, attics and garages for shelter.

CONFLICTS

- Major conflicts come when skunks dig up lawns, establish their residence under houses and spray pets.
- Raccoons raid garbage cans, dig up lawns for food and fish happily in outdoor fishponds.
- Opossums will dig in yards and uproot sod and plants while they look for food. They are very fond of fruit. Many people are afraid of them because of their fierce-looking teeth.

DETERRENTS

- Solid walls or chain link fences will exclude skunks from your property.
- Tack down fresh sod with fine mesh netting.
- Sprinkle cayenne pepper on susceptible areas.
- Minimize grubs and insects.
- Use scent deterrents such as mothball-filled socks and ammonia-soaked rags.
- Play a radio softly.
- Leave a light on at night.
- Remove food sources such as pet food and fallen fruit.
- Secure garbage cans with bungee cords, rope or chains.
- To deter raccoons from fishponds, loosely install 8-inch wire mesh horizontally around the perimeter of the pond. To keep raccoons from being able to reach the fish, arrange cinder blocks, rocks and plants to create a safe haven for them.



DIGGERS & SQUATTERS

SKUNK

{*Mephitis mephitis*, *Spilogale gracilis*}

Skunks are shy animals that try to stay out of the way. They emit a powerful odor that is very effective against other animals, but is ineffective against many other modern threats such as mechanized vehicles. As a result, skunks are rarely found in high traffic areas.

Appearance

About the size of a domestic cat, the most common skunk in our area is the striped skunk (shown), named for two white stripes down its back. It is known for its distinctive black and white fur and odiferous spray. Spotted skunks are smaller and less common than their striped counterparts.

Behavior

Widespread throughout the United States, skunks live in ground burrows, under trees and are at home in woodpiles and under buildings or decks. Their diet consists of insects, berries, nuts, fallen fruits and small mammals. Skunks spray when startled. Before spraying, they turn their rear towards the intruder, raise their tail and stamp their front paws. A skunk can repeatedly spray up to 12 feet.

» *Breeding: 4-6 Kits in May/June*
Active: Nighttime, Year-Round
Diet: Insects, Rodents, Carrion, Garbage, Fruit and Eggs



DIGGERS & SQUATTERS





RACCOON

{*Procyon lotor*}

Although raccoons are nocturnal, they are among the most recognizable animals in the United States. Raccoons are one of the few species that appear to have benefited from contact with humans, with some studies suggesting that their population density is up to twenty times greater in urban areas than in rural areas.

Appearance

Identified by their bushy, ringed tails and black-masked faces, these husky mammals can weigh up to 45 pounds. Their shaggy coats are primarily gray with tan shadings.

Behavior

These adaptable animals inhabit nearly every type of habitat in the United States and are primarily nocturnal.



» *Breeding: 4-5 Young in April/May
Active: Most Active at Night; May Sun
Themselves or Hunt for Food in Daytime
Diet: Insects, Rodents, Fruit, Garden
Crops, Garbage and Crayfish*



DIGGERS & SQUATTERS

OPOSSUM

{*Didelphis virginiana*}

Opossums are found throughout the United States but prefer mild winter areas. They have more teeth than any other mammal in North America (over 50), which they show to their enemies when confronted. Although they look fierce, they are gentle and very shy.

Appearance

Opossums are North America's only marsupial. They are the size of a cat, with grayish-white fur, a hairless prehensile tail and a pointed nose. The mother carries her offspring in her pouch or on her back.

Behavior

These slow-moving, nocturnal creatures may "play dead" when frightened, but will drool, growl and show their teeth to scare off people and predators. Despite these actions, opossums are rarely aggressive.

» Breeding: Two Litters a Year;
7-12 Babies per Litter
Active: Nighttime, Year-Round
Diet: Insects, Fruit, Carrion
and Garden Crops



DIGGERS & SQUATTERS



MOVERS & SHAKERS

Although feared by the general public, snakes are a valuable part of the ecosystem and are important in controlling rodent populations in our area. Although we discuss three species of snakes, there are many others living in Southern California.

* If you live in an area with rattlesnakes, opossums and king snakes are very beneficial creatures to have around. Opossums are resistant to rattlesnake venom and will eat rattlers; king snakes will also eat rattlers.

CONFLICTS

- Rattlesnakes make their way into yards and sunbathe on hiking trails. Many people are very afraid of all snakes.

BENEFITS

- Rattlesnakes control rodent populations.
- King snakes help control rattlesnake populations by eating rattlers and competing with them for food.
- Gopher snakes control rodent populations and compete with rattlesnakes for food.

DETERRENTS

- Minimize housing resources: thin or remove excess brush in your yard, keep lawn mowed and remove woodpiles at the end of winter.
- Eliminate rodent breeding and populations.

Rattlesnake Safety

- When gardening or hiking, watch where you put your hands and feet.
- Don't touch dead rattlesnakes: reflex actions in the snake may cause the head to bite.
- If you see one on your property, do not kill it—this is both inhumane and dangerous. Call your local animal control agency, humane society or wildlife center to handle the problem.
- If you are bitten: Stay calm and call 911. Do not apply ice to the area, do not take any painkillers or medications, do not use a tourniquet and never make an incision and suck out the venom.



MOVERS & SHAKERS

WESTERN RATTLESNAKE

{*Crotalus viridis*}

Several species (kinds) of rattlesnakes inhabit California, but the most common in our area is the Western Rattlesnake. These rattlesnakes are common in the dry areas of our foothill communities. Residents living near the hills should be careful to check for these venomous snakes in their yards.

Appearance

These rattlers are usually beige with diamond-shaped brown patches on their backs. Most species have a diamond pattern on a black, grey, brown, red or greenish background. To distinguish a rattler from a gopher snake, look for the characteristic broad, triangular head, plump body shape and the rattle at the end of its tail.

Behavior

Rattlesnake “season” is typically April through October when they can be found sunning themselves during the day. In the winter months, these snakes hibernate in colonies. They use their rattles to warn large creatures that they are in the area.





CALIFORNIA KING SNAKE

{*Lampropeltis getulus, L. zonata*}

Different varieties of king snakes live in all parts of the United States. They are found in logs and under rocks near streams. Extremely long-lived, their longevity record is over twenty-four years.

Appearance

Two subspecies of king snakes inhabit this area of California. The Common King Snake is usually banded black and white, black and brown, or black and yellow. The California Mountain King Snake has a black head, white collar and a body banded with wide red and narrow black and white bands.

Behavior

King snakes are diurnal (active during the day), but during warm weather they may become more active at night. These non-venomous snakes eat by constricting their prey. Their diet consists of mice, birds, lizards and other snakes.



MOVERS & SHAKERS

GOPHER SNAKE

{*Pituophis melanoleucus*}

There are over fifteen subspecies of gopher snakes in North America. Although often mistaken for rattlesnakes, they are non-venomous.

Appearance

Gopher snakes are often mistaken for rattlesnakes. Although their markings are similar, gopher snakes have thin heads and thin bodies with a pointed end instead of rattles.

Behavior

Gopher snakes feed on birds, rodents and rabbits by constricting them. They may hiss, lunge and rustle leaves with their tails to mimic rattlesnakes.



MOVERS & SHAKERS



PREDATORS

Residents in our foothill communities may perceive predators as vicious villains that threaten humans and pets. In fact, most predators are shy animals that avoid human contact. Unfortunately, they are opportunistic and will take outdoor pets. Predators play an important role in the natural world by keeping populations of prey species in check. These species include gophers, squirrels and rats. Many predatory species are endangered or threatened because humans have hunted them out of fear and to protect livestock.

CONFLICTS

- Mountain lions, bobcats and coyotes are known to take cats and small dogs in areas where there are many outdoor pets.
- Conflicts between bears and humans usually occur due to the scarcity of food.

BENEFITS

- All of these predators keep the populations of rodents and other wildlife under control.

DETERRENTS

- Control food resources in your yard: don't leave pet food outside and limit the use of birdseed because predators are attracted to the animals that feed on it.
- Keep yards trimmed and clear of excess brush and woodpiles that may serve as housing for predators or prey. Also be sure to keep compost contained.
- Outdoor lights, radio, noise or ammonia-soaked rags can be used in the yard to deter predators.
- Make a lot of noise: clap your hands, yell or bang pots and pans together. Also, make yourself look as big as possible: put your hands over your head or open your jacket wide. Never turn your back and run from the animal.
- Make use of squeezable airhorns and whistles.



PREDATORS

MOUNTAIN LION

{*Felis concolor*}

Although rarely seen, mountain lions are feared carnivores even though they prefer to stay away from humans. Mountain lions are also known as cougars, pumas, panthers and catamounts.

Appearance

Mountain lions are the largest of the predatory animals in Southern California. These reddish-brown felines are the size of a large dog. Their ears are erect and slightly rounded, and their long tail is the most distinguishing feature.

Behavior

Mountain lions are primarily nocturnal but may hunt by day. They dine on deer and other wild animals including coyotes, raccoons and birds.



BOBCAT

{*Lynx rufus*}

Bobcats are common throughout most of the United States.

These shy predators will avoid human contact when possible.

Appearance

These cats are the size of a medium dog with fur varying from buff to reddish in color. Occasionally mistaken for mountain lions, the bobcat has a short tail (six to seven inches long) with a black end, tipped with white and tall ears with short tufts of hair. These tufts act as antennas to increase a bobcat's hearing.

Behavior

These cats may be seen during the day but usually hunt at night. Their preferred diet consists of small mammals, but they may take animals as large as deer. The females are exceptionally solitary and territorial. Bobcats and coyotes are natural competitors.



» *Breeding: Mating is similar to that of a housecat. Young are born in April and May, although litters may be born during any month except December and January. Litters average 2 to 3 kittens after a 60-day gestation.*



PREDATORS

COYOTE

{*Canis latrans*}

Coyotes are sly, intelligent and very adaptable animals. Despite attempts to regulate their numbers throughout the United States, coyote populations have continued to increase.

Appearance

Coyotes look similar to small German Shepherds in size and shape. They have a long, slender muzzle with large, erect ears. Their tail is round and bushy.

Behavior

Primarily nocturnal, coyotes are omnivorous and enjoy a diet of small mammals, fish, reptiles, fruits and vegetables. Coyotes are attracted to urban neighborhoods because of the abundant food sources such as garbage cans, pet food, birdseed and outdoor pets.

» *Breeding: 5-6 Pups in March/April*
Active: Late Afternoon, Early Morning
Diet: Mice, Squirrels, Rabbits, Carrion,
Fruit and Insects



PREDATORS





BLACK BEAR

{*Ursus americanus*}

Omnivorous, Black Bears are opportunistic predators in woodlands and swamps. Populations are increasing across most of their range.

Appearance

The Black Bear is distinguished from other bears by smaller size, larger ears, a pale muzzle and a rounded back. Fur color varies geographically: most eastern bears are dark black and western populations can be brown, cinnamon or blond. Some coastal populations in British Columbia and Alaska are creamy white (Kermode Bears) or bluish-gray (Glacier Bears). Some bears have a white chest patch. Lips are adapted for seizing or grasping, especially when wrapping them around their prey. Males are larger than females.

Behavior

These animals often leave their marks on trees when stripping the bark to eat sap, while using its claws to climb trees or when rubbing and scratching them to mark their territory. In most areas, Black Bears hibernate through the winter on the ground or in tree dens. In the south, only pregnant females hibernate.



PREDATORS

COHABITATION:
it's a two-way street



Common Problems with Urban Wildlife

Problem

Aren't wild animals both dangerous and potential carriers of disease?

Wildlife will rarely transfer disease to humans and pets. By taking the following precautions, you can minimize the possibility of serious problems.

- **Protect Yourself:** Most wild animals are afraid of humans and will run away. If you find a sick, injured or orphaned animal, call the Inland Valley Humane Society & SPCA, or your local animal control agency.
- **Protect Young Children:** Teach children to be safe around wildlife. Enjoy wildlife from a distance. These animals may look cute, but their teeth and claws can be dangerous.
- **Protect Your Pets:** Keep your pets current on their vaccinations to minimize their risk of contracting diseases. Keep pets supervised, especially at night when wildlife is most active. Always walk your dog on a leash (it's the law!). If you or your pet is bitten, capture the animal if you can do it safely. Note your location and the type of animal that bit you or your pet and seek medical attention immediately.

Problem

I have a rattlesnake in my backyard.

Rattlesnakes are common in the dry areas of our foothill communities. Residents living near the hills should be especially careful to check for these venomous snakes in their yards. Rattlers may be found basking in sunny spots during the day and around cool, shady areas during the hottest times of day (summer). Check the section on Movers and Shakers for rattlesnake deterrents.

Problem

My cat brings me dead birds, squirrels, moles, etc. How can I discourage this?

Almost half of the adult wild birds brought to our shelter are rescued from the jaws of a cat. Of these cat-caught birds, few survive to be released. Hunting is part of a cat's natural instinct; domestic cats will kill numerous wild animals even if they are well fed. Fledglings (young birds) just venturing out of their nest are unable to fly and cannot escape a pouncing cat. But birds are not the only victims; squirrels, moles and young opossums can also fall prey to hunting pets.

The only way to protect wild animals from your pet is to supervise the cat while it is outside or to keep it indoors. Putting a collar and bell on your cat does not necessarily help. Bells don't always ring when a cat is stalking prey—and wild animals do not associate the sound of a bell with danger. Remember, being indoors increases the safety for your pet too!

Problem

An opossum followed my cat through the cat door last night.

Wildlife will take advantage of any area where food is available. Pet doors that are left open overnight are very inviting, especially if there is pet food on the other side. Opossums, raccoons and skunks are nocturnal and will let themselves in through your pet door. To minimize conflicts, bring pets inside and close your pet door before dark.

Be sure that all entrances into your house are secured. Cap chimneys and keep windows and pet doors shut.



PROBLEMS

Problem

There is a coyote in my area.

Coyotes, very adaptable predators resembling small German Shepherds, are attracted to areas that have available food, water and housing. If you live in an area with a known coyote presence, supervise your pets and young children while they are outside. Coyotes are most active early evening through early morning. For their protection, keep cats and small dogs inside during these hours. Always walk your dog on leash (it's the law!). For more information, check the section on Predators.

Problem

My pet was sprayed by a skunk.

Unfortunately, curious outdoor pets may get too close to neighborhood skunks. The offensive odor from the disgruntled skunk is unmistakable and may stick with your pet for a while. To eliminate the smell, mix one quart of 3% hydrogen peroxide, 1/4 cup baking soda and one teaspoon liquid soap. Wet down your pet and lather the mixture into your pet's hair for 3–4 minutes. Rinse. This homemade mixture is more effective than tomato juice or vinegar, but may fade your dog's coat. There are several commercial products that help remove skunk odor too.

Problem

An animal has pulled away the screens and moved into my crawl space.


Your crawl space is the perfect spot to set up housekeeping! It meets the needs of wildlife looking for a den site to sleep in and care for their offspring. Avoid these invasions by making the area inaccessible to wild animals. Secure all entrances to the crawl spaces under your house, shed or garage. This is especially important in early spring, before "baby season," and in the fall when animals are planning for winter.

SIMPLE THINGS TO DO TO DISCOURAGE WILDLIFE FROM VISITING YOUR YARD:

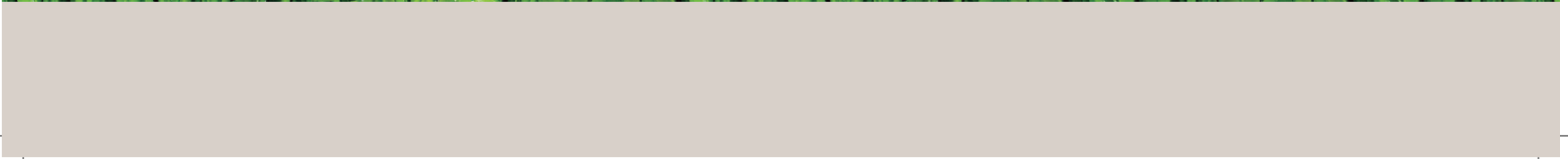
- Never intentionally feed wildlife.
- Wildlife is attracted to an easy meal; don't leave pet food or water outside, especially at night.
- Bring your pets inside before dark. Shut pet doors at dusk.
- Secure the lids of your outdoor garbage cans.
- Pick up fallen fruit from the ground nightly. Pick fruit when it's ripe.
- Fence or net areas that you wish to protect.
- Clear away woodpiles and brush piles after the winter. Keep vegetation near the house neatly trimmed.
- Close access to crawl spaces, attic, shed and garage spaces. Keep all doors closed at night.
- Cap or screen off your chimney to keep animals from falling in or building nests in the chimney.
- Keep barbecues clean and inside the garage.
- Keep compost in locked containers.



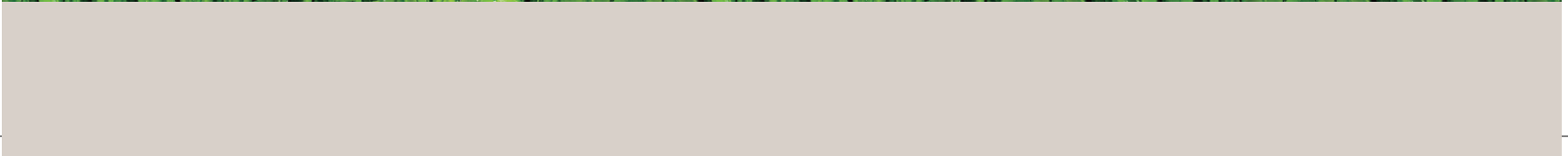
**Inland Valley
Humane Society
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A home away from home.

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Learn How to Live with Wildlife.



All the mammals mentioned have the potential to carry rabies. This is a virus that can only be transmitted through a bite that breaks the skin or by coming into contact with the bodily fluids of an infected animal. Rabies may affect you as well as your family pet. Some symptoms of a rabid animal include the inability to drink water, "frothing" at the mouth, a staggered walk or walking in circles and even the tendency for a normally gentle pet to act viciously. If you or your animals have come into contact with wildlife which results in a bite or contact with bodily fluids, please report it immediately. The Humane Society and the Health Department monitor any possible rabies situation very carefully. For their protection, all adult dogs and cats should be vaccinated against rabies once every 3 years unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian.





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