

Tips on Living with Wildlife

Now that spring is underway and the weather is warmer, wild animals are becoming more active, people are spending more time outside, and interactions between the two typically lead to an increase in phone calls to the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's Wildlife Helpline.

Very often the advice agency biologists give to callers who are concerned about wildlife in their backyards is to do nothing. While some encounters may call for action, the majority of the time, wildlife should be left alone and enjoyed from a distance.

Snakes Snakes won't bite if left alone and they will usually retreat if given the opportunity. Most snakes, even venomous ones, would much rather escape from people than bite them. Snakes don't view humans as a food source, and they prefer not to use valuable energy or venom in self-defense. Most snakebites occur when a person picks up a snake, steps on one accidentally, or tries to kill one. Depending on the species, killing a snake can be illegal. "When people encounter a snake, particularly in their backyard, it can be startling for both the person and the snake," said Jeff Hall, a wildlife diversity biologist with the Commission. "We reassure people that, for the most part, snakes are completely harmless and, if given a wide berth, a snake will usually move out of the area on its own in time."

The Commission does not send people out to trap and remove snakes since removing one snake is not going to prevent another one from taking its place. However, Hall provides a few tips that people can follow to make their backyards less hospitable to snakes.

- Clean up clutter by removing piles of rocks, wood, and other debris that attract rodents and snakes.
- Keep lawn grass cut short. Snakes prefer tall grasses that provide shelter for themselves and for their prey. They're also easier to spot in shorter grass.
- Close gaps and holes, repairing damage to siding and foundation, and sealing openings under doors, windows and around water pipes to discourage snakes from entering your home.

Foxes Making your backyards less hospitable to snakes can also deter other wildlife, such as foxes. It is increasingly common to see foxes during the daytime and is not a sign that the fox is sick. Spring time is when female foxes search for sheltered places to give birth and raise their young. Foxes are particularly fond of enclosed, cubby-like spaces, according to Falyn Owens, the Commission's extension biologist.

"In residential areas, foxes commonly choose to den under sheds, barns, porches and patios if those spaces are available," Owens said. "Prevent foxes from denning under buildings by enclosing and blocking access to these spaces."

In North Carolina it is illegal to relocate foxes or trap foxes outside the regulated trapping season without a depredation permit. Homeowners should employ non-lethal deterrents to make foxes uncomfortable enough to leave on their own.

Deterrents like flashing lights, portable radios tuned to a talk station, or motion-activated water sprinklers can convince foxes to go elsewhere. Even if they have already had pups, foxes will typically relocate if the den site becomes too uncomfortable, or they perceive the area is dangerous for their pups.

Foxes only use a den while raising pups, so once the pups are old enough to survive outside - usually by mid to late summer - they will abandon the den and move on.

Coyotes Similar to foxes, coyotes are now a common sight throughout North Carolina, including in residential and urban settings. While coyotes usually avoid people and human contact, Owens recommends that everyone, when outdoors, should be "coyote smart."

"Being 'coyote smart' is about being aware that a coyote probably lives near you, and acting accordingly," Owens said. "Coyotes view outdoor cats and small dogs as prey, so always keep your dogs on a leash, particularly small dogs, and keep your cats indoors."

If you do encounter a coyote, don't panic - coyote attacks on people are extremely rare. Hazing, or standing your ground and shouting, waving, or throwing small objects should be enough to scare away a curious coyote. This also keeps them properly fearful of people.

To keep coyotes, foxes, and otherwise wildlife from around your home, Owens provides the following tips:

- Never intentionally feed wildlife; doing so rewards them for coming near humans. This can cause a wild animal to lose its natural fear of humans, which in some cases leads to bold or aggressive behavior.
- Eliminate unintentional food sources by removing food when your pet is finished eating outside, securing garbage inside a building or in wildlife-resistant containers, removing fallen fruit from around trees, and use bird feeders that keep seeds off the ground. Foxes and coyotes are attracted to small animals gathered around bird feeders, so it is recommended that feeders be removed during the summer.
- Keep your yard free of debris piles, dense grasses or shrubs, or other areas that could provide shelter for animals you don't want around.
- Talk to neighbors about wild animals you've seen in the area, and share these tips to help prevent conflicts.

Songbirds In North Carolina, most songbirds start nesting in the spring. Knowing the difference between a nestling and a fledgling can help you make the right decision if you see one on the ground. Nestlings aren't yet fully feathered and are too young to survive outside the nest under the close care of their parents. Fledglings are more like teenagers; they've left the nest, have their feathers, and are able to walk, hop or fly short distances. They, too, are being cared for by the parents - but typically at a distance.

Nestlings found out of the nest can be placed back in the nest, if possible. "It's a myth that the adults will abandon their young if it has been touched by people. Most birds can't smell," said Owens. "If you see a nestling on the ground, put the bird back into its nest as quickly as possible. Fallen nests can be placed back in the nest tree."

In most instances, fledglings should be left alone since they're busy learning how to survive on their own. "Nestlings are often 'rescued' when they shouldn't be. If the fledgling is hopping or flapping around, doesn't appear injured, and isn't in immediate danger, leave it where it is," Owens said. "If there are cats around or it is otherwise in harm's way, move it to a safer perch nearby. Its parents are usually nearby searching for food to be putting for you to leave."

If a nestling can't be put back in its nest or you find an injured bird, contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator www.ncwildlife.org/Injured-Wildlife.

For questions regarding human interactions with foxes or other wildlife, visit ncwildlife.org/Have-A-Problem or call the Commission's N.C. Wildlife Helpline toll-free at 866-318-2401. The call center is open Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Compassionate Friends Meet Monthly

The Compassionate Friends, a support group for parents, grandparents and siblings who have lost a child of any age, welcomes you to attend their monthly meetings. They meet on the second Thursday each month, at 7 p.m. in the Training Room at Pee Dee Electric, located on Highway 52 South in Wadesboro. "We need not walk alone." For more information call Irvin Thompson at 704-694-8774.

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Drake Gallery, 110 South Rutherford Street in Wadesboro
Registration Deadline June 5, 2019



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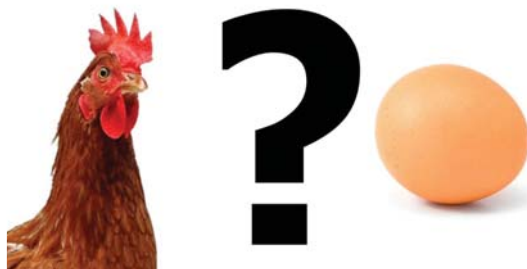
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Now is the Time to Prepare for Hurricane Season

Hurricane season begins June 1. Taking steps now to prepare your family, home and business can make a big difference:

- Create an emergency communication plan with your family. This plan spells out how everyone will contact each other, where to go and how to get back together.
- Build an emergency kit. Keep it ready at home, at work and in the car.
- Check your insurance coverage. Damage caused by flooding is usually not covered by homeowners insurance policies. Buy flood insurance.
- Know your community's evacuation plan, evacuation routes and how to receive alerts.
- Stay informed about current conditions. Listen to local officials and evacuation orders.
- Download an emergency weather app on your phone. Have backup power for your phone. Purchase a weather radio.
- Keep all important documents in a waterproof container to take with you if you evacuate.
- Ready.gov/hurricane and ReadyNC.org provide helpful information on how to plan.
- Unfinished storm repairs could make your home vulnerable to future storm damage.

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