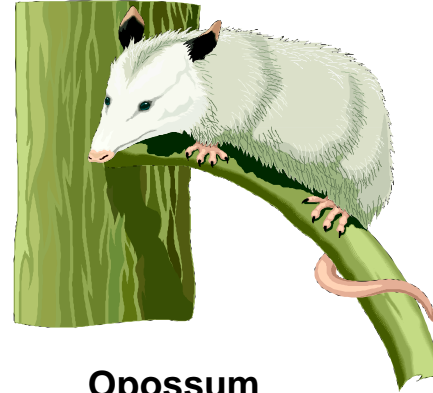


contact:

**Alameda County Vector Control
1131 Harbor Bay Parkway, STE 166
Alameda, CA 94502
510-567-6800
Fax- 510-337-9137**

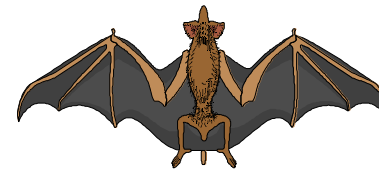
WILDLIFE



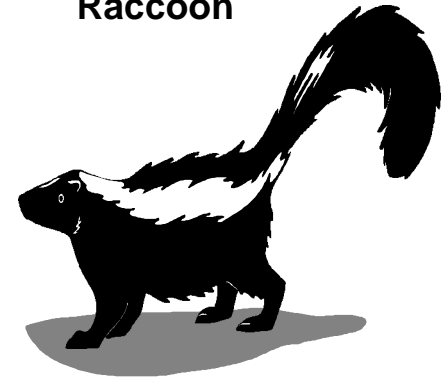
Opossum



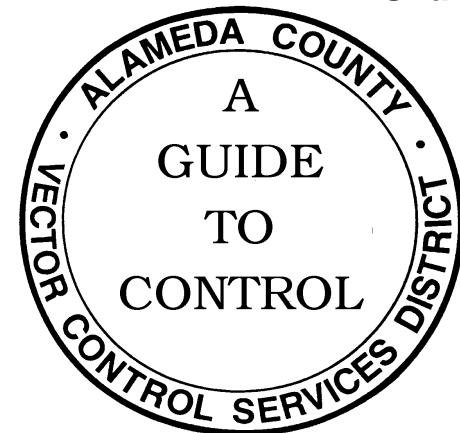
Raccoon



Bat



Skunk



Coexisting with Wildlife

Alameda County is home to an abundance of wildlife. On any given day, residents and visitors may be treated to the sight of a Red Tailed Hawk overhead or a family of raccoons across the street. While most people are delighted to see wild animals, not everyone enjoys sharing their property with them.

Sometimes people must confront problems caused by nuisance wildlife. In frustration, they may seek short-term, frequently lethal solutions. These methods usually fail to address the real problem and are followed by new and unexpected complications.

Fortunately, there are humane, long-term, and effective ways to deal with nuisance wildlife. The following guidelines will help you coexist peacefully with wild animals, many of which have already been displaced by human activities.

Prevent Problems

People often unintentionally make their homes and yards inviting to wild animals. Removing readily available sources of food, shelter, and water will discourage their presence.

Do not feed wildlife.

Although many people think they are helping animals by feeding them, the opposite is usually true. Feeding encourages wild animals to become dependent on hand-outs which are not part of their normal diet, to lose their fear of humans, and to congregate in unnaturally large groups, increasing the chances of disease trans-mission.

flags, and strips of metallic tape. Olfactory deterrents (available in garden and hardware stores) create scent barriers but must be reapplied after rain. Another option is an electric fence which delivers mild but annoying shocks to keep wildlife out of gardens and pastures. (Consult your local zoning office as well as neighborhood covenants to determine whether electric fences are permitted in your area.)

Not recommended: Trapping and relocating nuisance wildlife

⇒ At best, trapping and relocating nuisance wildlife is a short-term solution. Other animals will take the place of those trapped unless the conditions that attracted wildlife are corrected. Furthermore relocation causes stress for the animal, for young left behind, and for the existing populations- at the place of release.

Prevent Problems From Recurring

⇒ Once nuisance animals have left, be sure not to invite others to take their place. Have you removed all sources of food and water? Have you closed off all available shelter sites? Taking the precautions outlined above will prevent potential problems.

***Relax and enjoy Alameda County's
Wildlife.***

***For specific information about dealing
with problems caused by common
wildlife species in Alameda County***

least three feet from the ground. Remove brush piles from your yard and store wood off the ground.

- ⇒ Deny wildlife easy access into buildings by weather stripping around doors and windows. If you install a cat or dog door, select one that is opened by an electronic signal from your pet's collar, or keep the door closed at night.

Solve Existing Problems

- ⇒ If wild animals have taken up residence in or under your house, wait until they have vacated and then exclude them. Assume there are babies present in the spring or summer, and be careful not to separate the parents from the young. If possible, be patient until the family is old enough to move out.
- ⇒ If you cannot wait for animals to leave on their own, make their surroundings less inviting. Turn on a bright, flashing light and leave a non-stop radio talk show playing near their den site. Many animals are sensitive to smell, so deter them with moth balls or ammonia-soaked rags. It is most effective to deploy as many deterrents as possible at the first sign of problems.
- ⇒ If babies are not present, you can exclude adults while they are outside the house. Nocturnal animals such as bats should be closed out while they are active at night, whereas squirrels can be excluded during the day. Set up a one-way door or stretch a piece of plastic across the entrance. Use extreme caution to avoid trapping infants inside, they will be unable to use the one-way door, and their mothers cannot return to care for them. Only when you are certain activity has ceased and all the animals have left, close the opening permanently.
- ⇒ Outdoors, you can use visual repellents such as mirrors,

If you feed birds during the winter, place feeders where they will not attract other animals.

- ⇒ Do not offer wildlife the bounty of your garbage. Use sturdy trash cans with secure lids. Thoroughly rinse bottles and cans for recycling, and put food scraps in closed bins instead of open compost piles.
- ⇒ To avoid attracting raccoons, opossum,, and coyotes, do not feed your pets outside. If you must put cat or dog food outside, do so only during the day. Clean up leftovers after-ward and take food and water dishes in overnight.
- ⇒ Harvest fruits and vegetables as soon as they are ripe. Enclose your garden with appropriate barriers and use row covers or bird netting (available in garden and hardware stores) to protect vulnerable crops.

Do not provide shelter for wildlife

A building in poor repair is an invitation to wildlife.

- ⇒ Animals can squeeze into small spaces, so seal holes and cracks in and around the foundation of your house. Check under the eaves, along the roof line, and in the attic for openings, and replace loose shingles on the roof. Skirting the foundation and covering holes with hardware cloth may be necessary to prevent animals from gnawing through the repairs.
- ⇒ Prevent entry through chimneys and vents by installing screens. Keep dampers closed whenever the fireplace is not in use.
- > Outdoors, prune branches that overhang your house and are easy routes to roof and windows. To prevent animals from climbing trees, remove lower branches and wrap metal cylinders or cones around the trunk at

Raccoons

Raccoons are found in all types of habitats. Although they generally prefer riparian or wetland regions, over the past decade raccoons have become more comfortable living near human communities and do not fear people like most wildlife. In fact, they can be pretty bold.

A raccoon usually has one litter a year, and its mating season is from March to May. Occasionally, though, the season can be prolonged through July. The gestation period is typically 63 days, and litters average from two to seven babies. The raccoon is active at night, looking for insects, fruits, vegetables, acorns, seeds, fish, and small mammals. It is a seasonal eater that prefers fish, crayfish, and small mammals in the spring. During the other seasons, it feeds on acorns, seeds, fruits, vegetables, insects, and other invertebrates.

The raccoon is easily distinguishable by its black-masked face and ringed tail. It has a husky build and generally weighs between 15 and 40 pounds. Its coat is full and shaggy, and its coloring is gray with shadings of tan on its flanks. The heavily furred tail is usually tan and gray with black rings. The long slender toes on the front feet give the raccoon great dexterity in grasping food, and the larger surfaces on the back feet give it superb agility in climbing for food.

The raccoon has earned its infamous nickname, Bandit, which was first given to it because of its black-masked face. But, it's important to remember that humans have virtually forced the raccoon into the title. Urbanization and land development have taken the majority of the raccoon's natural romping grounds away but, rather than diminish, these hardy critters have adapted and flourished. So, we have problems with them claiming back "our" space for their own. Consequently, raccoons topple our garbage cans, nest in our attics, roam our lawns for food, and prey upon the fish in our ponds.

Bats

In Alameda County the bat we most often encounter is the Mexican free-tailed bat. This bat has short dense fur, grayish brown on top, and lighter colored below. This bat is only about 2 1/2 inches long. They live in colonies that may reach populations of 20 million bats, with densities of 500 bats per sq. foot!

Bats are susceptible to rabies, as are all warm-blooded animals. In recent years bats have become the second most important wildlife rabies carrier in California, just behind skunks, and ahead of foxes, bobcats and coyotes. Certain kinds of bats may carry rabies without showing symptoms of the disease themselves. Because this disease, always fatal to humans, is apparently widespread among many California bat species, contact with any bat should be avoided.

Bats benefit us because they feed on insects; we should not destroy them needlessly. The 20 million member bat colony can consume up to 1/2 million pounds of insects each night!

Bats normally do not attack people or animals- although sick bats have been known to do so. Vampire bats that feed on blood do not occur in California. They range further south in Mexico, and Central and South America.

Many bats roost in caves, hollow trees, and other natural shelters; others are attracted to spaces in attics, hollow walls, and unused areas inside and outside of buildings. The scratching and squeaking noises made by bats can be quite annoying. Their droppings have a highly objectionable and persistent odor that attracts new bat colonies after the original ones are broken up.

Besides the potential for rabies, bats carry parasites, particularly bedbugs. They also carry the bat bug (cimex) which closely resembles the common bedbug.

Bats seen during the daytime, or acting sick or injured must be reported to Vector Control or your local animal control, for pick-up and testing.

Skunks

The striped skunk is about the size of an adult house cat. It's fur is mostly black with white on it's neck and head. As with most striped skunks, the white extends down the back and through the tail, however, it does not necessarily have to have the white stripe, It can be totally black, too. The spotted skunk is rare in Alameda County. It is about half the size of a mature house cat, and as the name implies, has random white spots.

Adult skunks begin breeding in late February. Yearling females (born in the preceding year) mate in late March. Gestation usually lasts 7 to 10 weeks. Older females bear young during the first part of May, while yearling females bear young in early June. There is usually only 1 litter annually. Litters commonly consist of 4 to 6 young, but may have from 2 to 16. Younger or smaller females have smaller litters than older or larger females. The young stay with the female until fall. Both sexes mature by the following spring. The age potential for a skunk is about 10 years, but few live beyond 3 years in the wild.

The normal home range of the skunk is 1/2 to 2 miles (2 to 5 km) in diameter. During the breeding season, a male may travel 4 to 5 miles (6.4 to 8 km) each night. Skunks are dormant for about a month during the coldest part of winter. They may den together in winter for warmth, but generally are not sociable. They are nocturnal in habit, rather slow-moving and deliberate, and have great confidence in defending themselves against other animals.

Skunks are omnivorous in general, eating anything from acorns, to small rodents. Searching for food in soil, they are known to up-root gardens and lawns. Skunks are nocturnal, and leave their burrowed homes (which may be in the ground, under buildings, or beneath wood piles) just after sunset to search for food. They usually return by sunrise.

Besides being known for smelliness, the striped skunk is one of the animals in Alameda County that we find rabies in a few individuals every year. Seeing a skunk during the day is a good reason for calling Vector Control or your local animal control.

Opossum

No matter where you live in Alameda County, the opossum is there. Despite its rat-like appearance, it is not a rodent. This non-aggressive marsupial has survived since the time of the dinosaurs and can adjust to living just about anywhere.

The adult opossum is the size of a cat and is light gray to black in color. It has a pink nose, feet, and rat-like tail with black ears and a pointed snout. The opossum's life span in the wild is about 2 years. Many people who see an opossum that is drooling mistakenly think it has rabies. This is not the case. Statistics indicate that the incidence of *rabies* in opossum is very low. An opossum does, however, carry fleas as do all wild animals. Also, an opossum may bite if it perceives a threat to its well being, such as being grabbed or petted.

The opossum is very beneficial as a rodent and carrion eater. Besides eating all types of dead animals, it eats a variety of food including over-ripe fruit, grapes, and berries; insects such as cockroaches, crickets, beetles, slugs, snails, etc.; mice, rats, and roof rats; snakes; lizards; and eggs. It also cleans up uneaten food which would normally attract rats. An opossum will eat side by side with a cat out of a dish of cat food that is left outside, and it will consider the cat food a gourmet meal.

The opossum mating season is from January to July. Females have litters up to twice a year. The average litter is 5-9. Newborn opossums are 1/2 inch long and weigh .0050 of an ounce. At one week, they weigh .05 of an ounce. At 36 days, whiskers start to appear, and body hair becomes visible at 45 days. By the time they are 60-70 days old, they can weigh an ounce and may start to leave the pouch. At 75-85 days, they are weaned and rarely go into the pouch. They also start looking for their own food. At 90-120 days, they are hunting on their own but still may live in the same den with their mother until they find their own. Very few young opossums survive into adulthood.