

Raccoons are digging up my garden and lawn. Raccoons have a varied diet and sometimes find food sources in our gardens and lawn. Commercial or natural repellants can be applied around the perimeter of affected areas of lawn or garden. Repellants are not species-specific and should be used with caution with outdoor pets. Scare tactics such as bright, blinking lights or a loud radio can be used in gardens to deter raccoons. Another option is the commercially available Scarecrow, a motion triggered device that directs a powerful stream of water at unwanted visitors.

Raccoons are fighting with my cat or dog! Most conflicts with pets occur because of competition over outdoor food bowls. The best way to prevent these types of conflicts is to feed pets indoors. Raccoons will also protect their dens from dogs. If you know you have a denning raccoon in the area, keep dogs under control and house them indoors at night when raccoons are most active. Make sure pets are current on their vaccinations.

Won't the raccoons starve if we stop feeding them? No. Raccoons are capable of traveling great distances to find food and territory. If you stop feeding, raccoon populations will slowly adjust to the level that can be accommodated by the available natural habitat. Although it is well intended, intentional feeding of raccoons is highly destructive to the animals. Raccoons that become habituated to human handouts are likely to become pests. Unnaturally large congregations of raccoons lead to territorial conflicts and disease outbreaks. If you care about raccoons, please don't feed them!



## Audubon Society of Portland

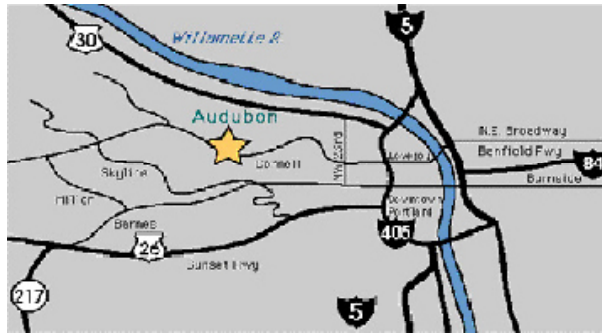
### Wildlife Care Center

5151 NW Cornell Road

Portland, OR 97210

Phone: 503-292-0304

9 a.m.-5 p.m. - 7 days a week 365 days a year



### Administration Offices

Phone: 503-292-6855

Fax: 503-292-1021

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mon-Fri

### Nature Store

Phone: 503-292-9493

Hours: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Mon-Sat

10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sun

### Sanctuaries

Every day, dawn to dusk

### Rare Bird Alert

Phone: 503-292-6855

[www.audubonportland.org](http://www.audubonportland.org)



Living with Urban Wildlife

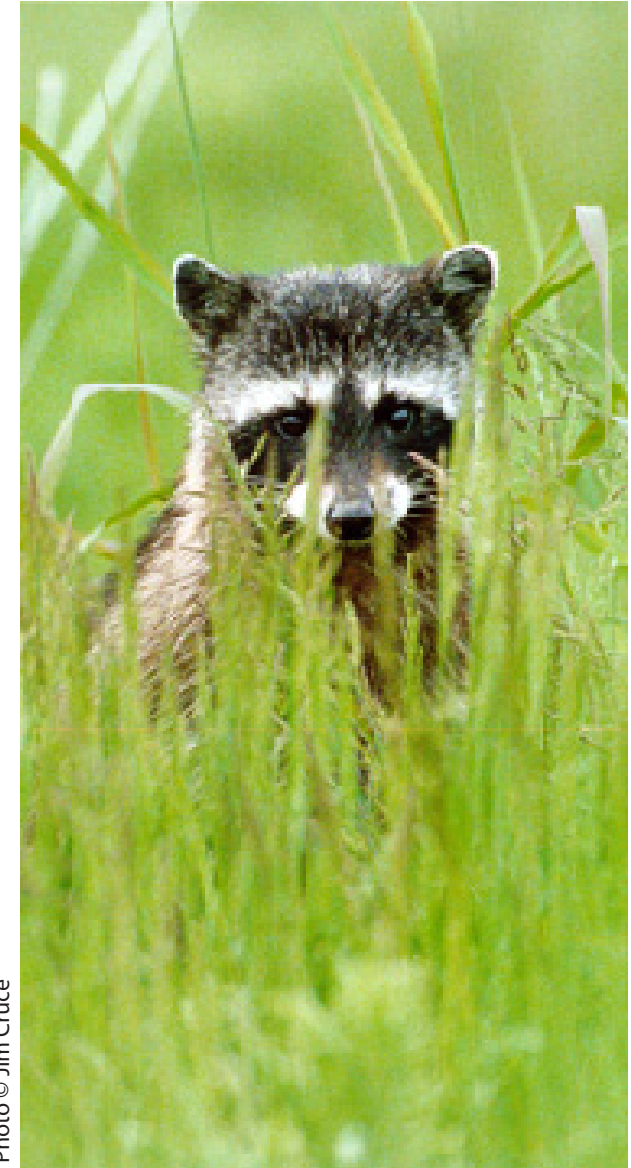


Photo © Jim Cruce

# Raccoons



# Living with Raccoons

## NATURAL HISTORY

Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) are opportunistic, intelligent creatures that have adapted well to our urban and suburban landscapes. A general lack of predators combined with easily accessed food sources such as garbage cans, compost bins, gardens and outdoor pet food bowls have allowed raccoons to proliferate even in the most developed of areas. Raccoons often occur in urban habitats at much higher densities than they do under more natural circumstances.

Raccoons are primarily nocturnal animals but can be seen at any time of the day. Adult raccoons in the Pacific Northwest typically range in weight between 10 and 25 pounds but can get larger. They are omnivorous and consume a highly varied diet that includes fruit and vegetables, insects, small rodents, fish, and human handouts, pet food and garbage when available. Raccoons typically den above ground in tree cavities and under downed logs, but will substitute chimneys, attics and crawlspaces where available. Breeding season in the Pacific Northwest extends from early March through early fall. Litters can range from 1-7 kits. Young are weaned at 2 months of age but may remain with the mother through the first winter.

## TIPS ON LIVING WITH RACCOONS

- Do not feed raccoons: Deliberate feeding of raccoons makes them more likely to get into situations where they are unwanted or in danger. It also encourages unnaturally high population levels within a small geographic area. This creates a higher risk of disease transmission among the raccoons and increases the likelihood they will become pests. It is much better and more humane to allow

population levels to adjust to the food and habitat naturally available.

- Feed pets indoors: This will eliminate a raccoon attractant and will diminish the likelihood of an unwanted encounter between your pet and a wild animal.
- Tightly cover all garbage cans.
- Seal up all potential denning locations within your home: Placing caps on chimneys and blocking outside entryways to basements, attics, and under porches will reduce the likelihood that you will wind up sharing your home with a raccoon.
- Naturescape for wildlife: Plant native vegetation and leave snags standing. Making natural food and shelter available will reduce the likelihood of unwanted human-raccoon interactions.
- Raccoons are not pets! Raccoons do not make good pets. Like all wild animals, raccoons can carry diseases and parasites. When they reach sexual maturity, they can become territorial and aggressive. It is illegal in the state of Oregon to take a raccoon out of the wild to be kept as a pet.

## SITUATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Identifying a "nuisance" raccoon. Raccoons are a fact of urban living. In many cases, tolerance and prevention (eliminating unnatural food sources, sealing up potential denning locations) is the best approach. If you do find yourself in conflict with your local raccoon population, the first thing to consider is identifying the source of the problem. What is attracting the raccoon to your property? Is there a way to eliminate the attractant? Do you need to speak with your neighbors about doing the same? The vast majority of urban raccoon conflicts occur because somebody in the neigh-

Photo © Michael Durham



borhood is either deliberately or inadvertently providing some sort of unnatural food source for the raccoons.

Raccoons are raiding my garbage cans! Raccoons will take advantage of any available food source and are well-known garbage raiders. Garbage cans should be secured tightly to prevent a raccoon's access. You can fasten the lid securely with rope, bungee cords or weight. Garbage cans can be secured to a wooden stake or wall to prevent being knocked over. Commercial repellants can also be sprayed directly onto garbage cans to deter raccoons.

A raccoon is denning under my porch, deck or house. Exclusion is the best way to prevent a raccoon from making its home under your porch, deck or house. If there is a raccoon, find out if it has young in the den. If there are young present, it is best to wait until the young are able to leave the den with their mother before trying any exclusion techniques. Close off all but one entrance or exit to the den. Wait until all raccoons have left before sealing up the final entrance. To urge a raccoon with young out of a den, place a small, battery-operated radio tuned to a talk station into the den. This disturbance will help convince the raccoon to relocate her young to a new location. Seal up the entrance to the den when you are sure all raccoons have vacated.

## Wildlife Relocation is Not a Solution

Relocation is ineffective. Relocated raccoons are quickly replaced by other raccoons. The best solution is to leave the raccoons alone and remove or modify whatever is attracting them specifically to your yard.

Relocation is inhumane: Although many people perceive relocation as a humane approach to resolving conflicts, it is in fact just the opposite. Relocated raccoons have to fight with already established raccoons for territory, food and shelter. Many raccoons do not survive relocation; and, those that do, disrupt already established populations. Relocated raccoon kits are almost always abandoned, as it is nearly impossible for a mother to carry and care for her young while also establishing herself in a new territory.

Relocation is ecologically destructive: Relocation of raccoons disrupts already established populations. Excessive “dumping” of raccoons into natural areas surrounding the Portland Metro area has resulted in ecological damage and has been implicated in the transmission of disease among otherwise unaffected populations.

Relocation is illegal in Oregon: Raccoons are protected under state law and relocation of these animals is illegal. Raccoons may be trapped with a permit from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, but they must be released at the same site or euthanized.

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