

Backyard Wildlife

One of the benefits of living in the country is having an abundance of wildlife. While most wildlife do not pose a threat, some can become a nuisance. This section discusses attracting wildlife and how to avoid nuisance wildlife problems.

Wildlife Habitat = Food + Water + Cover

If your land offers these three components, most likely you will attract some wildlife. Food requirements will vary by species, from seeds and berries for birds to grasses and shrubs preferred by deer and elk. Water on or near your property will increase the variety of wildlife you will attract. Cover is also needed for hiding from predators, nesting and shelter.

By growing a diversity of native vegetation and maintaining a water source you will provide the necessary elements of good habitat. The type of plants you use to provide food and cover will determine the type of wildlife species that are attracted to your property.

What you may see as an untidy brush pile or fallen tree can be wonderful habitat for backyard wildlife. Dead trees provide homes to many species of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Brush piles and border vegetation (hedges, windbreaks, etc.) can also provide needed shelter in managed landscapes. Consider leaving snags, brush piles, peripheral vegetation and other woody material on your property unless they pose a safety hazard.

Nuisance Wildlife

Wildlife of all sizes are common in Hood River County including black bear, cougar, bobcat, coyote, elk, deer, beavers, raccoons, weasels, gophers, squirrels and skunks - to name just a few. It is important to keep in mind that your property may be part of their territory. While most predators avoid humans, their natural instinct is to kill easy prey, which can include livestock and pets. Other wildlife may simply enjoy grazing in your garden or snatching your chicken eggs. Precautions can be taken to avoid conflict.

Resources

OSU Extension Service:

Check out their many publications on wildlife at:
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/>

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife:

www.dfw.state.or.us/springfield/wildlifeandpeople.html

Wild Neighbors: the Humane Approach to Living with Wildlife, by John Hadidian

Just as you can attract wildlife by providing food, water and shelter, you can deter wildlife by not providing these essentials. The most common nuisance animals reported in the county are raccoons and skunks. Both are attracted to residences by the lure of an easy meal such as pet foods and compost piles. A simple solution is to not leave pet food outdoors and locate your compost pile away from your home. To ensure your home remains pest free, seal all openings that could allow wildlife to move in.

Valley quail are a common sight in the Hood River Valley.



Livestock

While larger livestock are rarely attacked, smaller animals are more vulnerable. All animals need shelter from the elements with smaller animals needing protection at night when most predators are active. A sturdy enclosure is a good investment to protect your animals. Keep in mind that if you have fowl to protect, skunks, weasels and other small predators can enter through very small openings.

Dealing with Pests

While deer and elk are beautiful to watch, they are also attracted to gardens. You may wake up to find your prize roses were browsed by hungry deer, or that everything you planted in your garden has disappeared. Netting can be draped over plants as a deterrent, but you can also select landscaping varieties that deer do not prefer. A tall fence around a vegetable garden is recommended.

For more tips on how to deal with nuisance animals and avoid wildlife conflicts call your local Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife office.

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