Homeowner's Guide for Resolving Wildlife Conflicts

Habitat Extension Bulletin No. 45

Wildlife is an important and desirable part of our world. Thanks to our relatively small human population and the diversity and abundance of natural habitats, Wyoming is home to an amazing variety and quantity of wildlife. Many people choose to live here for that reason.

Wildlife near our homes can be relaxing, educational and enjoyable. Under the wrong circumstances, however, wildlife can become a nuisance, cause property damage or present a danger to people or pets. This bulletin is designed to help homeowners solve problems with wildlife in residential areas. Although many of the same principles apply, the specifics of handling wildlife damage to agricultural commodities (crops or livestock) are not discussed here. Those problems should be referred to the local animal control office or a Game and Fish Department office listed at the end of the bulletin.

Red Squirrel

Why They're Here

Problems may occur when an animal either accidentally wanders into an urban area or is attracted there by food or shelter.

Wandering animals will often leave on their own, if left alone. Otherwise, they may be captured and relocated. Always use caution when handling wild animals. Most will bite when scared and some may carry disease (see RABIES).

Animals seeking food and shelter can usually be discouraged by removing the attractant or making it unavailable. Pet foods, garbage, bird seed, garden crops, ornamental shrubbery or food left for other species may attract animals to your yard. Woodpiles, well-developed landscaping, tall weeds, loose siding, accessible crawl spaces or attics, ledges, culverts, sewers and vacant buildings are all examples of cover used by wildlife near urban and rural homes. Many homeowners enjoy attracting wildlife. Sometimes, however, the damage can be a source of aggravation.

Preventing Problems

There are some relatively simple ways to avoid most problems. In each case, the goal is to remove an attractant or make it inaccessible.

- ❑ Garbage should be stored in a secure shed, garage or elevated rack and not put out on the curb until the day it is to be collected.
- ❑ Pet food should not be left where other animals can find it, especially overnight.
- ❑ Gardens and valuable trees and shrubs should be fenced to minimize browsing damage. See discussion of each species for fencing specifications.
- ❑ Brushpiles, tall weeds, unused equipment, woodpiles and the like provide hiding places for many small animals. Problems with rodents, rabbits and other small animals can be minimized by removing this hiding cover.
- ❑ Holes in foundations, loose siding, ventilation openings, cracks leading to attics and crawl spaces–all these should be located and sealed. Sheet metal flashing or heavy-gauge hardware cloth works well for most openings.
- ❑ Foods should be stored in rodent-proof cabinets or tightly sealed metal bins.
- ❑ Uneaten and discarded food and seed hulls should be cleaned from below birdfeeders regularly. If you or a neighbor feeds birds, squirrels, deer or other wildlife, extra effort may be necessary to avoid damages.
- ❑ Cover window wells with hardware cloth or commercially available plastic covers to keep small animals from falling in and becoming trapped.

Habitat Extension Services
WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

Young Animals

Good habitat in urban areas give city dwellers the chance to see the most intimate details of wildlife life cycles, including the birth and growth of young animals. It's easy to misinterpret the behavior of parents and offspring in these situations. Most wild-hoofed mammals, some small mammals like cottontail rabbits and ground-nesting birds appear to abandon their newborn infants. Actually, the parents are waiting nearby for their infants to gain enough strength to escape predators. The adults keep their distance to avoid attracting predators to the newborn. Until the young animals are ready to run, they hide in heavy cover, waiting for their mothers to visit for quick feeding sessions.

Deer mouse

These infants are seldom "orphaned." Approaching or disturbing them may lead predators to an easy meal. Coyotes, skunks, raccoons, foxes and a variety of avian predators may actually follow a human, hoping that the disturbance may expose easy prey. People also frighten wild parents. Game and Fish Department regulations state that it is unlawful to "take or possess" a game animal without proper permits. This includes picking up infant game animals. Federal laws also forbid capturing game animals, nongame birds and other species. The best way to handle such situations is to leave the young animals alone.

Fledgling birds in tree nests often fall out of their nests while exercising their wings. While it is possible to return the fledglings to their nests, the young birds seldom stay there long. The adult birds are always nearby, doing their best to protect the youngsters. It is extremely difficult for a human benefactor to adequately feed fledglings—the best way to handle them is to make sure all domestic cats and dogs are confined for a few days until the birds learn to fly.

Solving Specific Problems

The mere presence of wildlife near your home is not always a problem. People vary in their tolerance levels, but make sure an animal is causing, or is likely to cause, a problem before taking action. Once a problem is identified, every effort should be made to solve the problem without harming the animal.

In some cases, direct control (killing) of some animals is the most practical way to stop the damage immediately.

Most cities have ordinances prohibiting the discharge of firearms within city limits. Some also prohibit pellet guns or other weapons that might otherwise be useful for dispatching a nuisance animal. Setting traps within city limits may also be restricted. City police stations are the best source for specifics on local ordinances.

Many kinds of wildlife are protected and cannot be killed except under specific circumstances. Specific seasons and licenses have been created for game animals and furbearers. Most birds are fully protected (see BIRDS). Many nongame mammals are unprotected and may be taken when necessary.

Many pesticides have been developed for this purpose. Improper use of these chemicals, however, can cause more problems than it solves, endangering the health of humans and other animals. Before using pesticides, you may want to consult your local animal control agent or agricultural extension office. Often there are alternative methods of control that pose less threat to public safety. Where chemicals are deemed appropriate, it's important that they be used only for their intended and approved purposes. Please read and follow label directions carefully. Your health and that of your neighbors depends upon it.

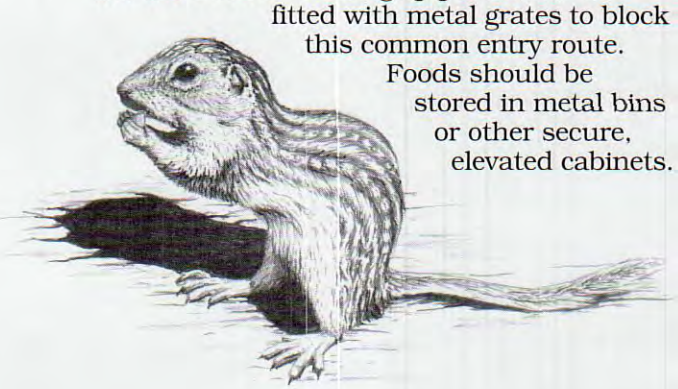
Listed are suggestions for handling problems caused by various creatures. A brief description of each animal and the problems it causes is followed by a discussion of how to make attractants unavailable.

HERBIVORES

Mice and Rats

Wyoming is home to several species of mice, voles and rats. All are attracted to houses, cabins or other buildings that offer hiding places and/or food. Where strong food odors are present, these rodents may gnaw through several layers of wood or sheetrock.

Rodent-proof construction and food storage are the best ways to avoid problems. Any holes or openings around the foundation, under the eaves or into the attic should be sealed with rodent-resistant materials like concrete, brick, galvanized sheet metal, aluminum or one-quarter-inch mesh hardware cloth. By extending a foundation 36 inches deep or by installing a sheet metal skirt that deep, you can keep rats from burrowing under the house. Drainage pipes should be fitted with metal grates to block this common entry route. Foods should be stored in metal bins or other secure, elevated cabinets.

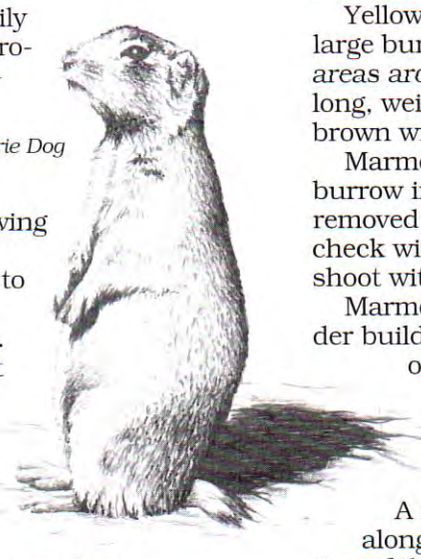


13-Lined Ground Squirrel

Garbage, pet food and bird seed are frequently overlooked by homeowners trying to rodent-proof their premises, but these are rarely overlooked by rodents searching for a meal.

Once repairs have been made to exclude mice and rats and protect food from them, one can proceed with removing offending individuals. Many styles of traps are available commercially. Snap traps, the most familiar, are designed to kill mice or rats instantly. Some live traps can catch up to a dozen or more mice in a single setting. Check hardware stores or outdoor magazines for these traps.

Poisoned baits are also readily available from hardware and grocery stores. Follow label directions carefully.



Prairie Dog

Ground Squirrels and Prairie Dogs

Ground squirrels are burrowing rodents common near many towns and cities. They are five to ten inches long. Some have stripes or spots on their backs. Prairie dogs are larger, without stripes or other markings. Both are active above ground throughout the day. Many people mistakenly call ground squirrels "gophers," which also live in some areas of Wyoming, but are rarely seen above ground (see GOPHER).

Ground squirrels and prairie dogs are primarily vegetarians. Their foraging can damage lawns, gardens and flower beds. Their burrows can disrupt the uniformity of a lawn. Occasionally one will fall into a window well and become trapped.

If a prairie dog or ground squirrel becomes trapped in a window well, place a board in the well to serve as a ramp and let the animal escape on its own. Another alternative is to remove the animal with a fishing net or live trap.

If only a few ground squirrels are present, they can often be live-trapped and relocated a mile or more away. Many different brands of live traps are available commercially. Check outdoor magazines for addresses or contact your local game warden or animal control office. Flooding the burrows will sometimes cause the animals to escape from another entrance. A cloth bag over the exit holes will usually work to catch the fleeing animal, but use heavy leather gloves and handle the animal with care. They will bite. Transfer the animal to a metal barrel immediately, or it is likely to chew its way out of the bag. Rat traps (larger versions of the standard mouse trap) are also effective when baited with peanut butter, but these can be dangerous if small children or pets are present.

Trapping is usually only a short-term solution. Ground squirrels and prairie dogs are difficult to exclude because they can burrow under or climb over fences. Poison baits have been developed for both ground squirrel and prairie dog control. If your problem is severe and you want to use poison, contact your local animal control office or agricultural extension agent. Follow label directions carefully. Ground squirrels are not protected by law and may be taken at any time. Prairie dogs are protected only in a small part of Park County where black-footed ferrets are a concern.

Marmots

Yellow-bellied marmots, or rockchucks, are large burrowing rodents found in mountainous areas around the state. They are 14 to 19 inches long, weigh five to ten pounds and are yellowish-brown with a yellow belly and a white forehead.

Marmots sometimes cause problems when they burrow in yards or under buildings. They can be removed either by live-trapping or shooting, but check with local authorities if you want to trap or shoot within city limits.

Marmots can be discouraged from digging under buildings by sealing all openings with concrete or hardware cloth. A skirt of heavy-gauge hardware cloth around the building is the best defense. The skirt should extend 18 inches into the ground, then bend 90 degrees outward for 12 inches. A marmot or other burrower digging down along the foundation will encounter the portion of the skirt bent outward and will usually stop digging.

Marmots are not protected by law and may be taken at any time.

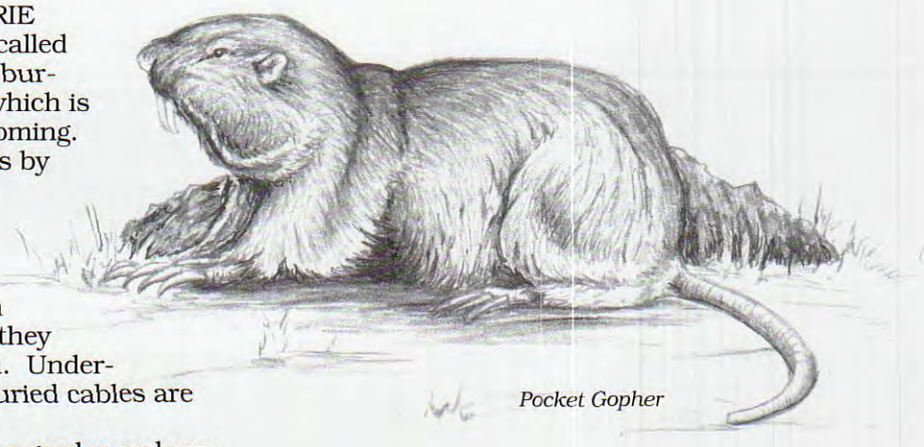
Marmot

Gophers

Pocket gophers are small burrowing rodents rarely seen above the ground. Their presence is detected by the mounds of soil they push to the surface. These mounds completely cover the opening to the burrow. Many people refer to

ground squirrels as "gophers" (see GROUND SQUIRRELS and PRAIRIE DOGS). Gophers are sometimes called moles, but the mole is a different burrowing animal—an insectivore—which is absent or rare across most of Wyoming.

Gophers occasionally kill plants by eating their roots. This can be a serious problem once they discover a garden. Small trees are also sometimes killed. The mounds of dirt are also a concern for some people, especially when they interrupt the uniformity of a lawn. Underground plastic water pipes and buried cables are sometimes damaged by gophers.



Pocket Gopher

Gophers can be excluded from a garden or lawn by burying a small-mesh (one-quarter-inch mesh) fence at least 18 inches deep. Underground irrigation pipes and cables can be protected by enclosing them in two-inch or larger diameter pipes. Those gophers already in the yard can be eliminated with specially-designed traps or poison baits registered and approved for pocket gophers. Contact the local animal control office or agricultural extension office in your area for help. Gophers are not protected by law and may be taken at any time.

Tree Squirrels

These entertaining, bushy-tailed rodents are common in cities wherever there are mature trees. The eastern fox squirrel is relatively large (18 inches to 24 inches long) and is brown with an orange belly. Fox squirrels are usually in deciduous trees such as cottonwood, especially in cities. Red squirrels are smaller (ten inches to 15 inches long) and noisier. A short black line along the red squirrel's side separates its white belly from its orange reddish-brown or black back. The red squirrel, in its various color phases, is common in coniferous forests across the state.

Squirrels eat nuts, pine seeds, flower and tree buds and other vegetable matter. Their feeding can cause damage in orchards and they can be a nuisance at bird feeders. Most of the problems they cause result when they get into houses (usually the attic) and build nests.

Squirrels can be excluded by sealing all holes, vent openings and chimneys with one-half-inch mesh hardware cloth. Make sure the squirrels are not still in the house when you seal their entrances, though. You should leave a live trap or snap trap baited with peanut butter and check it regularly for several days to ensure no squirrels are left inside. Squirrels are classified as small game so they can be taken by licensed sportsmen during open seasons, but squirrels causing property damage may be taken at any time without a license.

You can keep squirrels off your house by excluding them from the surrounding trees and power lines. A two-foot-wide band of sheet metal wrapped around tree trunks and power poles set three feet off the ground will keep squirrels from climbing them. The metal can be sprayed with a gray or brown primer paint to make it less obvious. Trim tree branches to leave at least six to ten feet between trees to keep squirrels from jumping from adjacent trees.

To make birdfeeders squirrel-proof, place them on metal poles far away from trees to keep squirrels from jumping to them. Feeders that attach directly to windows with suction cups are also usually squirrel-proof. Feeders hung from tree branches can be made squirrel-proof by suspending a metal disc (such as a garbage can lid) a foot or two above the feeder. Simply run the string from the top of the feeder through a hole in the center of the metal disc and to the tree branch. A large knot in the string will keep the disc suspended above the feeder. A squirrel climbing down from above will encounter the disc and be dumped onto the ground.

Occasionally a squirrel will come down the chimney and enter the house. In this case, open all windows and doors leading outside, shut doors leading to other rooms and either herd the animal out or simply wait for it to leave. Then be sure to cover the chimney with one-half-inch mesh hardware cloth to avoid a repeat performance. Clean the hardware cloth regularly so soot doesn't build up and clog the chimney or cause a fire hazard.

Rabbits and Hares

Wyoming is home to four species of cottontail rabbits (desert, mountain, eastern and pygmy) and three species of hares (white-tailed jackrabbit, black-tailed jackrabbit and snowshoe hare). The cottontails and the snowshoe are smaller than the jackrabbits and have comparatively shorter ears. Both the snowshoe hare and white-tailed jack turn white in winter. The cottontails live in nearly all habitats of the state, while the jackrabbits live only in the open prairies and basins. The

snowshoes are restricted to the forested mountains.

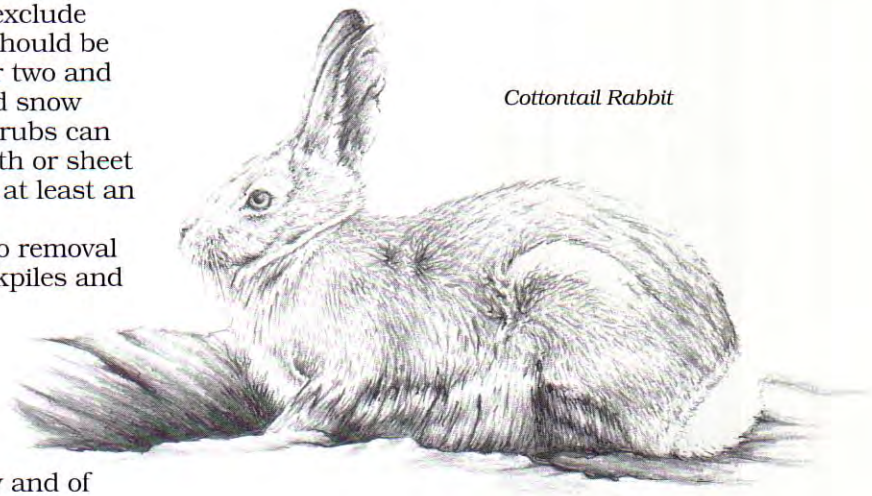
Cottontails cause most of the damage in residential areas, though jackrabbits or snowshoes may become a nuisance in some areas. In spring and summer, rabbits may eat flowers or vegetables. During the winter, they clip the branches and gnaw the bark of woody plants.

Cottontails and snowshoes are classified as small game, so they can only be killed by licensed hunters during open seasons (fall and early winter). Merely taking rabbits rarely solves the problem, however, because as long as food and cover are available, more rabbits will likely appear.

Rabbits and hares are easily excluded from gardens and shrubs with a simple fence. The mesh should be one inch or smaller to exclude baby rabbits. The bottom of the fence should be flush to the ground or buried an inch or two and extend at least a foot above the expected snow level. Trunks of individual trees and shrubs can be protected with tubes of hardware cloth or sheet metal. These should encircle the trunk at least an inch or two away from the tree.

Hiding cover is essential to rabbits, so removal of tall weeds, dense shrub patches, junkpiles and other hiding places will usually keep rabbits away. Holes leading under porches and buildings should also be plugged.

Chemical repellents can be sprayed on or spread near valuable vegetation, but this protection is usually temporary and of questionable value.

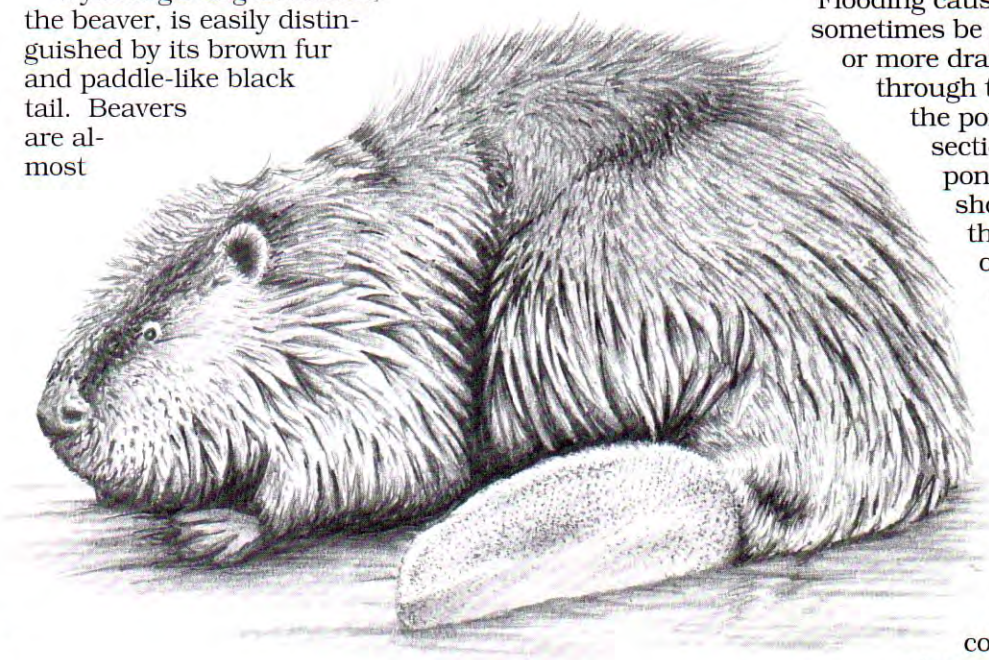


Cottontail Rabbit

Beavers

Wyoming's largest rodent, the beaver, is easily distinguished by its brown fur and paddle-like black tail. Beavers are almost always found near streams or lakes, but young animals may wander for several miles looking for a new territory. Beavers living near people can cause problems when they dam streams, dig tunnels or cut trees.

Wandering beavers are rarely a problem. If one shows up in your yard, keep dogs away and give it a chance to leave on its own. Otherwise, the beaver can be caught by inverting an empty garbage can over it, sliding the lid under both can and beaver, then turning the can right-side up. A shovel or rake may be useful in herding the animal toward the can. The animal can then be released along a stream somewhere many miles from any house.



Beaver

Flooding caused by beaver dams can sometimes be controlled by installing one or more drainage pipes. Run a pipe through the dam near the bottom of the pond, then thread an upright section of pipe to the end in the pond. The upright section should reach only as high as the maximum permissible level of the pond. The number and diameter of drainage pipes necessary depends upon the stream. The pipes should be able to transport water through the dam as fast as water is added to the pond during maximum streamflow (during spring runoff).

Beavers damaging roadbeds, etc., by tunneling are more difficult to discourage. Short of lining the stream with concrete or woven wire (which creates a new set of problems), there is little you can do to discourage tunneling. Beavers

Porcupine

are classified as furbearers and normally can be taken only by licensed trappers during specific seasons. Wyoming state law, however, allows landowners to immediately take any beavers flooding meadows, damming irrigation systems or constructing ponds that would endanger livestock, with no license required. The most efficient way to remove nuisance beavers is to trap them. If you do not know a trapper personally, contact your local game warden. Shooting beavers can be dangerous (bullets may ricochet off the water) and shooting is rarely effective at removing more than a small percentage of the primarily nocturnal animals.

You can prevent beavers from damaging your valuable ornamental trees with sheet metal flashing extending from the ground to two or three feet up the trunk of the tree or shrub. Beavers can be excluded from your lawn completely with a tight fence, especially if it's a metal fence (chain-link, for example). A fence can also help keep beavers out of a section of stream, though beavers may occasionally burrow under the fence.

Porcupines

This basketball-sized rodent with long black hair, shorter white and black quills, short legs and a stubby tail is familiar to most people. The porky cannot throw his quills, but a slap from his tail can leave several hundred quills imbedded in a dog's face or a person's arm.

Porcupines cannot run fast, though their long claws enable them to climb trees very quickly. They eat all types of vegetation, including grass, flowers and tree bark. They are especially attracted by salt and may chew leather goods or tool handles for the salt left there from perspiration.

Sheet metal or hardware cloth can be used to protect trees. A fence around your yard or garden will usually exclude porcupines, but they can climb well.

If a porcupine turns up in your yard, catch it in a garbage can, as described under BEAVERS. Keep dogs away. The animal can be released away from residential areas in an area with trees or tall willows which it will feed upon in winter.

Porcupines are usually nocturnal, so you may need to set a trap baited with salt, apples or other fragrant fruits or vegetables. Check with your local game warden or animal control office to possibly borrow a trap.

Porcupines are classified as predatory animals and can be taken at any time without a license.

Deer, Antelope, Elk and Moose

These familiar big game animals are sometimes attracted to residential areas to browse on ornamental shrubs, gardens or flower beds. Most of the damage caused by deer is done at night or at any time of day during the winter. Some residents put food out specifically for deer or antelope and then become upset when the animals browse their landscaping or that of their neighbors. During fall, buck deer may rub their antlers on small trees, either to remove the velvet once the antlers are fully grown or to create a visual and scent-oriented territory marker.

Fencing is usually the most effective solution. A six-foot-high fence will discourage most deer, but an eight-foot fence may be necessary where deer populations are high and the attractant is powerful (a garden, for example). You may want to fence only individual plants, or the entire perimeter of a garden or yard. Electric fences are usually not necessary but may be helpful in extreme situations. Some cities have restrictions on fence heights, or on electric fences, so check with local authorities.

Several chemical repellents are available from garden centers or greenhouses. These vary in their effectiveness, but most should be reapplied regularly to keep the shrubbery smelling and tasting nasty. Other scare tactics, such as floodlights and noisemakers often work for only a short time. A chained dog may work to keep big game out of your yard, but don't allow your dog to roam free where deer may be encountered. Allowing dogs to chase wildlife is a crime, and game wardens are authorized to shoot dogs chasing big game.

Big game animals are protected by law and can

only be taken by licensed hunters during open season.

Perhaps the best long-term solution is to landscape with plants that are not attractive to big game. A list of trees and shrubs that are adapted to Wyoming's climate but usually not eaten by deer or antelope follows:

TREES	**SHRUBS**
Boxelder Maple	Dryad (yellow & white)
Englemann Spruce	Common Juniper
Pines (lodgepole, limber, ponderosa, piñon)	Cinquefoil (Potentilla)
	Cotoneaster
Larch	Raspberry
Honeysuckle	English Ivy
Smoke Tree	Creeping Mahonia
Russian Olive	Silverberry
Hawthorne	Buffaloberry
	White Spirea

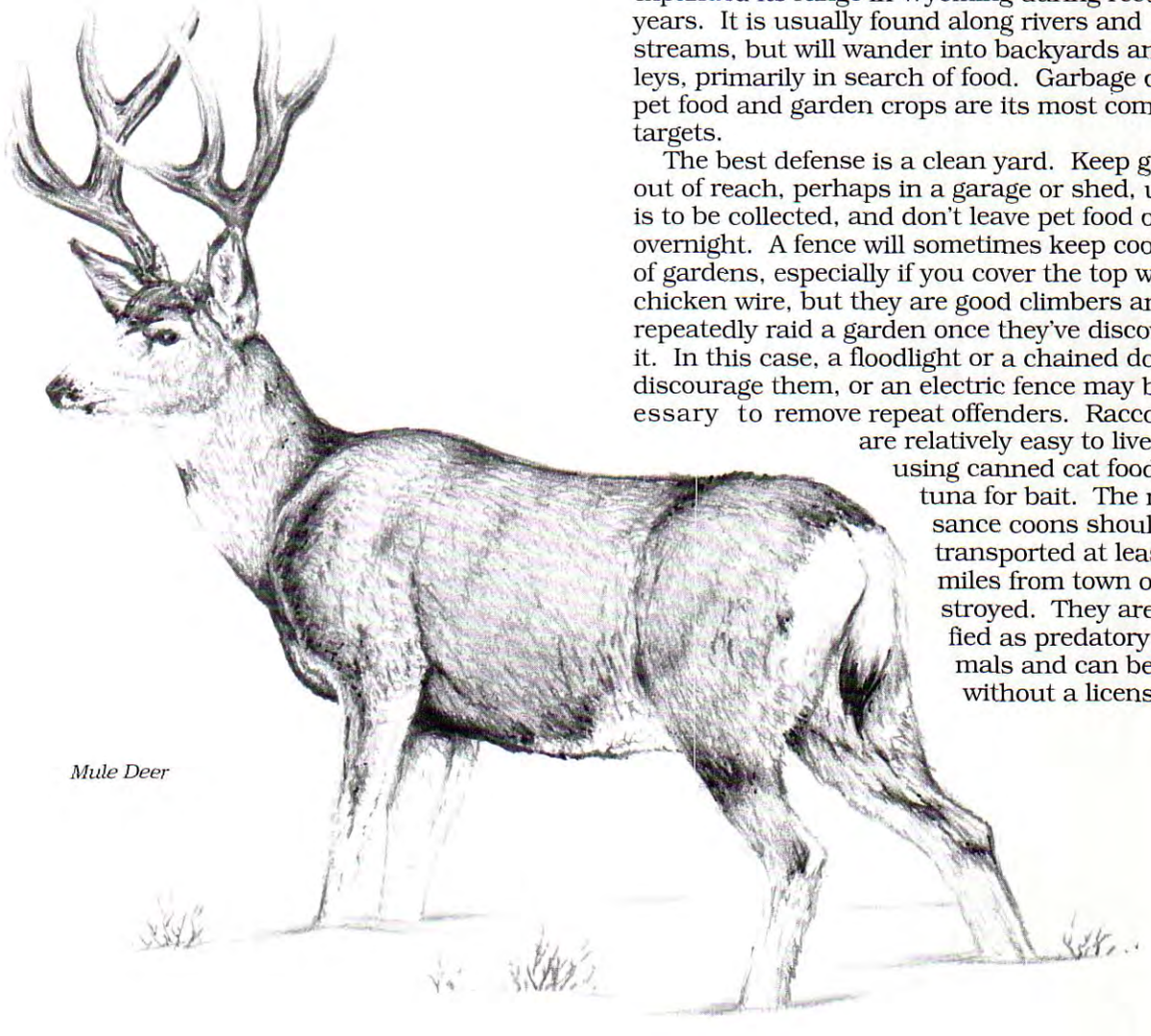
Raccoon

SCAVENGERS

Raccoons

This black-masked, ring-tailed scavenger has expanded its range in Wyoming during recent years. It is usually found along rivers and streams, but will wander into backyards and alleys, primarily in search of food. Garbage cans, pet food and garden crops are its most common targets.

The best defense is a clean yard. Keep garbage out of reach, perhaps in a garage or shed, until it is to be collected, and don't leave pet food out overnight. A fence will sometimes keep coons out of gardens, especially if you cover the top with chicken wire, but they are good climbers and may repeatedly raid a garden once they've discovered it. In this case, a floodlight or a chained dog may discourage them, or an electric fence may be necessary to remove repeat offenders. Raccoons are relatively easy to live-trap, using canned cat food or tuna for bait. The nuisance coons should be transported at least ten miles from town or destroyed. They are classified as predatory animals and can be taken without a license.



Mule Deer

Striped Skunk

Raccoons also sometimes enter sheds or attics, using them as dens. Coons can be excluded by sealing entrances and blocking access by securing a three-foot-wide band of sheet metal flashing around trees and power poles used to gain access to buildings.

Skunk

Everyone is familiar with the striped skunk, but few want him as a neighbor. Although this black-and-white, cat-sized animal has a generally pleasant disposition, is rarely seen except at night and is relatively harmless, the skunk has one formidable weapon—his scent glands. The spotted skunk is smaller, less common and spotted rather than striped, but it also has potent scent glands. Around houses, there is always the possibility that a skunk will encounter a dog, cat, small child or car. The result can be an unpleasant aroma that will linger in the neighborhood for weeks. For this reason, skunks are usually removed when they settle in residential areas.

Skunks occasionally wander through towns and are seen in yards and alleys. Often these animals will leave on their own, if no food or den sites are found. In any case, removal of food and cover is the best way to avoid problems. Pet food should not be left out overnight, and garbage should be put out only on the day it is to be collected. Fencing yards and gardens may help, but the fence should extend at least 18 inches into the ground to prevent skunks from burrowing underneath. Skunks will often build a den under a house or porch. To prevent this, any holes in the foundation should be sealed with hardware cloth or sheet metal. Any resident skunks should be live-trapped and relocated to the wilds before sealing the holes, however. Several handfuls of mothballs scattered under a building will often convince a skunk to leave, at least temporarily, and may improve trapping success that evening.

Live traps for skunks can usually be borrowed from the Game and Fish Department or your local animal control office. Bait the trap with tuna or canned cat food. A skunk in a live trap will usually not spray if approached quietly. If the trap is covered with a blanket, the skunk can usually be safely transported to an area several miles from any houses and released.

Alternately, the skunk can be drowned by submerging the entire trap in a lake, canal or barrel of water. Skunks are legally classified as a predatory animal and can be taken at any time. If shot, however, skunks will usually spray.

If someone or something is accidentally sprayed by a skunk, the odor can be removed or at least reduced by washing with tomato juice. More effective is a compound called neutroleum alpha. Check with your local animal control office, extension agent, veterinarian or pet supply dealer for a source of neutroleum alpha.

Bears

Black bears may wander into residential areas looking for food or habitat not occupied by other bears. Often these are young males looking for a territory. Encounters with dogs or people usually send them up the nearest tree.

Black Bear

Badger

Keeping garbage and food properly stored will usually keep bears away from your house. If one does turn up, leave it alone and it will probably leave. If it climbs a tree or draws a crowd of onlookers, call the local game warden.

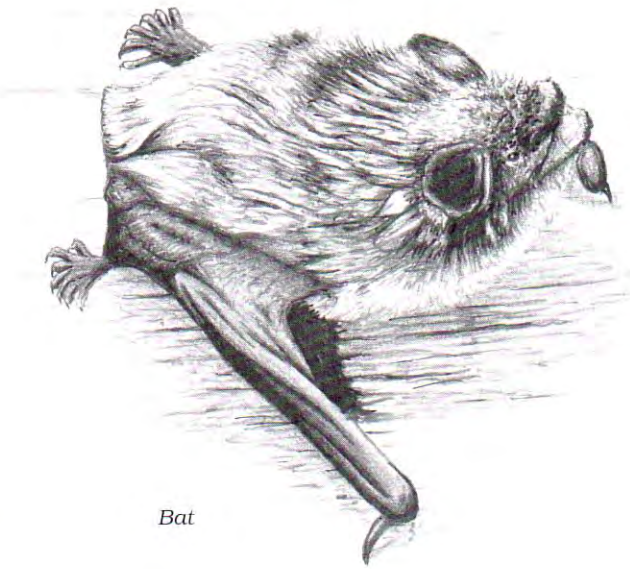
Bears are classified as trophy game and can only be taken by licensed hunters during open seasons.

PREDATORS AND INSECTIVORES

Badgers

Occasionally these short-legged gray animals with distinctively striped faces and long front claws will dig a burrow in a residential yard. This usually happens where ground squirrels are abundant nearby. Often these burrows are used for only a few days, then the animal will move on.

Removing the food source (rodents) is the best way to keep badgers out. If one sets up housekeeping in your yard, you can either live-trap and relocate or wait for the badger to move on. Either call a licensed trapper or the local game warden who can put you in touch with a trapper or perhaps loan you a live trap. Badgers are classified as furbearers. They may be taken by licensed trappers year-round or by a property owner or his employee whenever a badger is damaging private property. Badgers are quite aggressive and should be handled with caution.



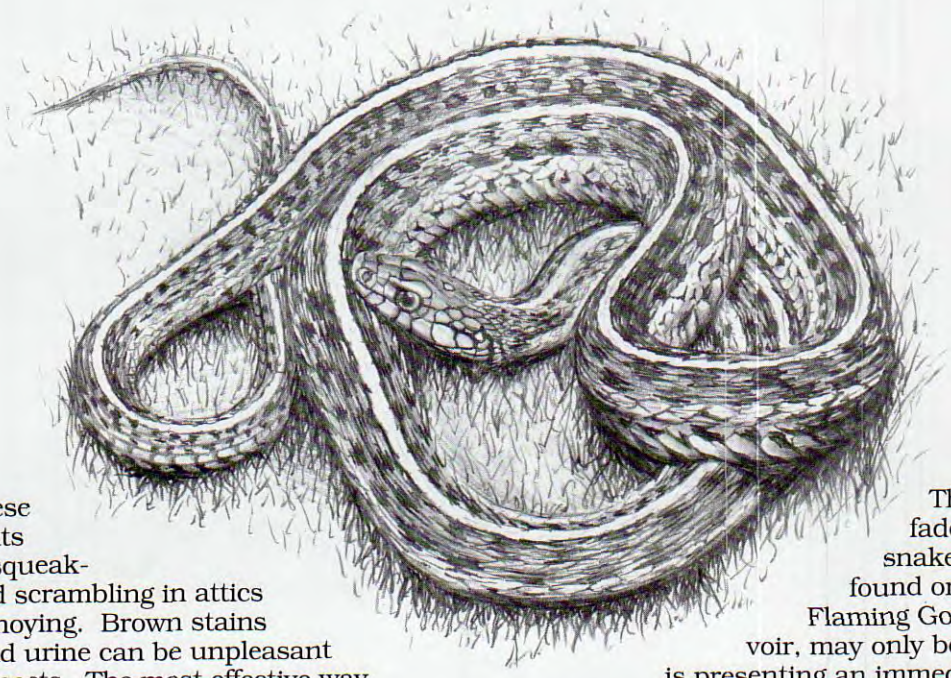
Bat

Bats

Several species of bats live in Wyoming and all are valuable insect eaters. Bats flying outside around your house are a problem. Sometimes bats will enter a building through a window, chimney, attic vent or other small crack.

If a bat enters the living space of your house, open the windows and doors, shut off all lights and wait for the bat to leave. If it is not gone in a few hours, use a fishing net to catch it, then release it outdoors. Always wear leather gloves when handling bats, as a small percentage of bats may carry rabies. If someone is accidentally bitten, do not release the bat. Instead, see a doctor immediately and take the bat along so it can be tested for rabies. Be especially cautious of bats found alive on the ground, unable to fly.

Bats seek dark areas in which to roost during the day. They can crawl through amazingly small



Garter snake

cracks to get to these places. If many bats are present, their squeaking, scratching and scrambling in attics or walls can be annoying. Brown stains from their feces and urine can be unpleasant and may attract insects. The most effective way to combat the problem is to exclude the bats by sealing all cracks and holes with one-quarter-inch hardware cloth, metal flashing or caulking. Loose siding, roof eaves and shingles may also be used by bats and should be sealed. A thorough insulation job will also help keep bats out of attics and walls if all cracks leading outside are sealed. Constant illumination with electric lights and ventilation with fans will also discourage bats from roosting in attics. When sealing an attic to exclude bats, plug all entrances except one. The final entrance should be plugged after the bats have left for the night.

Snakes

The few varieties of snakes we have in Wyoming are all valuable to the homeowner for insect and rodent control. Only the prairie rattlesnake and its close relative, the midget-faded rattlesnake of southwestern Wyoming, are poisonous. Both have horny rattles on the ends of their tails, which they rattle loudly when alarmed. Garter snakes and bullsnakes are the most common, harmless snakes in Wyoming.

You can largely eliminate snakes by eliminating their hiding places. Rock gardens, woodpiles, junk heaps and similar structures that offer hiding places should be removed. Fencing with sheet metal or one-quarter-inch hardware cloth may also work.

If there's a snake in your garden that you would like to remove, you can either capture and relocate it or kill it. All snakes except one are unprotected by law and can therefore be taken at any time. The midget faded rattlesnake, which is found only near Flaming Gorge Reservoir, may only be taken if it is presenting an immediate threat to someone's health or safety. Perhaps the easiest way to kill a snake is to decapitate it with a shovel.

Harmless snakes can usually be caught by hand. Use gloves if you're squeamish or perhaps enlist the assistance of a friend or neighbor. A cloth bag or cardboard box works well for transporting a snake. Capturing rattlesnakes takes a bit more finesse and should not be attempted without the assistance or advice of someone familiar with handling snakes.

If someone is bitten by a rattlesnake, call a doctor or report to a hospital emergency room immediately so snake anti-venom can be administered.

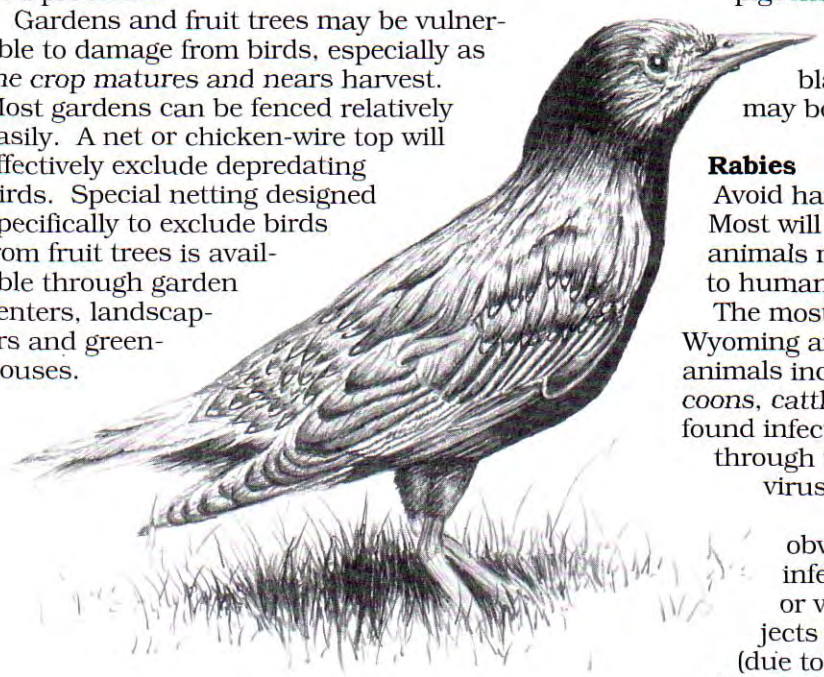
Birds

Nearly 400 species of birds have been documented in Wyoming. Most of these are purely beneficial to man, but some may cause damage occasionally. Among the more common complaints against birds in urban areas are droppings accumulating beneath roost or nest sites, excessive noise from large flocks early in the morning, damage to garden crops or fruit trees, and damage to wood siding from woodpeckers drilling on houses.

Birds that commonly travel in large flocks, like starlings, blackbirds and pigeons, usually roost together for the night in the dense branches of mature trees or on protected ledges of buildings. When these roost sites are directly over driveways, sidewalks or porches, the accumulation of droppings can be unacceptable. Trees can be made less appealing by pruning them fairly drastically. Remove half to one-third of the major branches to

leave the remaining branches more exposed with little or no dense cover. Ledges can be modified with sheet metal or masonite to leave angles of at least 45 degrees or steeper where birds cannot perch. If birds attempt to continue roosting, repeated scaring with firecrackers, bottle rockets, water hoses or bright lights may discourage the birds. By dispersing these large flocks, the noisy clamor of birds each morning will also be eliminated. Persistent problems with huge flocks may require the coordinated efforts of several agencies and the public across the city. Consult with your local animal control office for help with recurring bird problems.

Gardens and fruit trees may be vulnerable to damage from birds, especially as the crop matures and nears harvest. Most gardens can be fenced relatively easily. A net or chicken-wire top will effectively exclude depredating birds. Special netting designed specifically to exclude birds from fruit trees is available through garden centers, landscapers and greenhouses.



Starling

Woodpeckers sometimes drill holes in wood siding when searching for food or building nests. In the spring, woodpeckers search for a noisy surface like a rain gutter or a loose board and pound loudly to establish a territory or attract a mate. This is called "drumming."

To combat the problem, first make sure your house is not infested with ants or other insects. If so, call an exterminator for help. Wasps and other insects may infest grooved paneling. Plugging the tiny holes leading sideways from these grooves with putty or caulking can exclude insects and eliminate the problem. Painting the wood siding with a latex paint will seal out insects and eliminate the natural wood surface woodpeckers hold onto. Drumming can be discouraged by repeatedly scaring the offending birds away with a spray from a garden hose, flashing pinwheels, fake snakes, owls or hawks or loud noises. By installing a board loosely to a nearby tree you may be able to shift the bird's energy elsewhere. All damaged areas on the house should be covered with sheet metal or hardware cloth painted to match the siding.

Most birds are protected by either state or federal law and may not be killed. Exceptions are pigeons, starlings and house (English) sparrows, which may be taken at any time. Under some circumstances, blackbirds causing agricultural damage may be taken.

Rabies

Avoid handling wild animals whenever possible. Most will bite when scared. A small minority of animals may carry diseases that can be passed to humans. Rabies is the most serious of these. The most common carriers of the rabies virus in Wyoming are skunks and bats, but many other animals including dogs, cats, foxes, coyotes, raccoons, cattle, deer, antelope and moose have been found infected. The disease is usually transmitted through the bite of an infected animal, as the virus is present in the animal's saliva.

Abnormal behavior is the most obvious sign of rabies in an animal. An infected animal may be excessively bold or vicious or snapping at inanimate objects and perhaps foaming at the mouth (due to an inability to swallow). This is called "furious" rabies. Some infected animals never develop the "furious" symptoms and instead exhibit "dumb" rabies. These animals become uncoordinated and sluggish and may develop tremors or convulsions. Any animal exhibiting these symptoms should be reported to animal control or public health authorities immediately. Do not attempt to capture the animal, as the risk of being bitten is too great. Be sure to keep pets, such as dogs and cats, away or they may be bitten and become infected.

Animals to be particularly careful of include live bats lying on the ground, unable to fly, and normally nocturnal animals like skunks out during the day behaving abnormally.

If someone is bitten by an animal suspected of

carrying rabies, dispatch the animal and report to a doctor or hospital immediately. Take the suspect animal along so it can be tested for rabies, but handle the animal with care. The entire brain of the suspect animal is required for the tests, so the animal must not be killed by shooting or striking its head.

Where To Get Help

If you follow the guidelines in this brochure and still have problems with wildlife damage, there are people who can help. For problems with feral dogs or cats, predatory animals (coyote, jackrabbit, porcupine, raccoon, red fox, wolf, skunk or stray cat) or predacious birds (house (English) sparrow or starling), contact your local animal control office. If you want to treat an outdoor area with a pesticide to kill rodents, insects or other animals, contact your local agricultural extension agent. Look in the phone book under county or U.S. government. If you are having problems with nongame birds or mammals, big game (deer, antelope, elk, bighorn sheep or moose), small game (cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare and fox, gray or red squirrels), trophy game (black bear, grizzly bear or mountain lion), furbearers (badger, beaver, bobcat, marten, mink, muskrat or weasel) or game birds (grouse, partridge, pheasant, ptarmigan, quail, turkey, waterfowl, crane or doves), contact the Game and Fish Department. The local game warden is listed in the phone book under Wyoming State Government or call the nearest district office at the toll-free numbers listed below:

Jackson	1-800-423-4113
Pinedale	1-800-452-9107
Cody	1-800-654-1178
Sheridan	1-800-331-9834
Green River	1-800-843-8096
Laramie	1-800-843-2352
Lander	1-800-654-7862
Casper	1-800-233-8544
Cheyenne	1-800-842-1934

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