



## Co-existing with Wildlife

### Opossums



The opossum is a small mammal approximately 4-14 lbs. It has moderately long fur that ranges in color from white to dark gray and is frequently darker on the legs and lighter on the back. Its face is long and pointed with dark, rounded, paper-thin, hairless ears. The tail is hairless, scaly, and prehensile. Except for females with young, opossums are solitary animals.

Opossums are nocturnal preferring to scavenge/hunt at night for fruits, vegetables, nuts, meat, eggs, insects, pet food, and garbage.

They are found in many different habitats from woodlands to highly developed residential areas. In urban areas, they have been found living in attics, garages, chimneys, woodpiles, under houses or decks, or in any place that offers protection.

### Raccoons

Raccoons are medium sized mammals approximately 12-35 lbs. The fur has a salt and pepper appearance with the black mask marking on a whitish face. They also have a bushy tail with 4 to 7 black rings.

Raccoons are nocturnal preferring to scavenge/hunt at night for fruit, berries, grain, eggs, poultry, vegetables, nuts mollusks, fish, insects, rodents, carrion, pet food and garbage. In rural areas, raccoons may feed on farm crops or raid poultry houses. Contrary to popular myth, raccoons do not always wash their food before eating; although they frequently play with their food in water.

Raccoons den up in hollow trees, drainpipes, homes and buildings, under decks and storage buildings, brush piles, and abandoned burrows. Keep in mind that raccoons are good climbers. Moreover, they are strong animals capable of seizing and pushing or pulling objects with considerable force. Entry is usually made through open, weak or loose places.



### Skunks

The striped skunk is a small mammal approximately 4-10 lbs. The fur is long and black with two variable broad white stripes down its back. The head is triangular; the tail large and bushy. Skunks expel a strong musk from their two scent glands near their rear. They are capable of spraying several times with accuracy to about ten (10) feet. Confrontation with pets often results in the pet being sprayed or bitten.



Skunks are nocturnal, preferring to scavenge/hunt at night for insects, small rodents, carrion, poultry, eggs, nestling birds, fruit, pet food, and garbage.

Skunks will use any sheltered place as a den including wood piles, animal burrows, under homes, decks, and sheds.

Skunks are one of the primary carriers of rabies in California. Rabies is a viral disease that is fatal in mammals, including man and domestic animals (dogs, cats, livestock). It is transmitted by the bite of an infected animal. The County of Los Angeles, Department of Public Health handles rabies control, resource information provided below.

## Laws and Regulations

It is a violation of California state law to keep wildlife as pets. Only authorized rehabilitators may keep injured or orphaned wildlife and only for limited periods of time. California Fish & Game Regulations prohibit the relocation of wildlife without written permission. For further information on the legal status of wildlife, contact your California Department of Fish & Game Regional Office, contact information found below.

## Prevention

Wildlife are attracted to urban areas because food, water, and shelter are easily accessible.

Trapping wildlife is not a solution. If you do not remove the attractor, other wildlife will follow.

- Feed pets during daylight hours and remove leftovers immediately, remove water nightly.
- Keep pet doors locked at night.
- Frequently harvest gardens and pick-up fallen fruit.
- Control grub worms or other subsoil insects, remember the safety of your pets when using chemicals.
- Trim tree branches, keep them at least ten (10) feet from the roof and trim climbing plants and keep them away from eave areas.
- Keep tight fitting lids on garbage cans.
- Use appropriate screens to cover attic vents, chimneys, foundation vents, and decks.
- Cover pools, spas and ponds with appropriate covers.

## Sick or Injured Wildlife

Sick or injured wildlife are still wild animals and should not be approached. Please call your local animal control agency and they will respond.

## Snakes

Rattlesnakes are easily identified by their broad, triangular shaped heads, narrow necks, relatively heavy bodies, diamond like scale patterns and rattles on the tail. Do not approach a rattlesnake. If the snake feels threatened it will shake its rattles as a warning before striking. Venomous snakes are capable of inflicting serious injury or death. Venomous species require special handling techniques. You should call your local animal control agency for assistance.



## Resources and Additional Information

For wildlife regulations:

State of California, Department of Fish and Game, [www.dfg.ca.gov](http://www.dfg.ca.gov),

Contact: South Coast Regional Office (858) 467-4201

For bites and disease control:

County of Los Angeles, Department of Public Health, Veterinary Public Health, <http://ph.lacounty.gov/>

Contact: 562-401-7088 or [vet@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:vet@ph.lacounty.gov)

For urban coyotes or other predatory wildlife:

County of Los Angeles, Agricultural Commissioner, <http://acwm.lacounty.gov/>

For general animal information:

County of Los Angeles, Department of Animal Care and Control, <http://animalcare.lacounty.gov>

Call Center: (562) 940-6898 or [animalinfo@animalcare.lacounty.gov](mailto:animalinfo@animalcare.lacounty.gov)

Wildlife Preservation Resources:

California Wildlife Center, [www.californiawildlifecenter.org/home.html](http://www.californiawildlifecenter.org/home.html)

Habitat Preservation Authority, [www.habitatauthority.org](http://www.habitatauthority.org)