BAD ANIMALS or RESOURCEFUL ONES

"Let nature take its course ...Just not in my backyard?"

Wildlife are very resourceful. Unlike trapping and the use of poisons, animal proofing is a safe and effective solution to human/wildlife conflicts. By eliminating the attractions that bring the animals to your home in the first place, and by your behavior or erecting physical barriers, you can condition the animals to stay away.

In many cases, by the time the homeowner discovers a wildlife problem and begins to seek out solutions, the offending animal has already been conditioned that his actions are being positively rewarded with food etc.and can safely be repeated without a consequence. You need to change his thinking, which will change his behavior.

Example #1

The last 3 times the raccoon raided the trash can there were no dangers (dogs, bright lights, and easy access) to discourage him. So he has inadvertently been conditioned that it is safe to return a 4th time, maybe with babies in tow - teaching them that this a good and safe spot to eat .

Example #2

A homeowner has been feeding ducks that have been visiting his property since the fall. However, it's now spring and the ducks are seeking out nesting sites and soon there will be baby ducklings under foot and swimming in the pool. He originally conditioned (or trained them) to return to his property for food by feeding them; now he must recondition them if he wants the behavior to stop.

Example #3

A coyote has been frequenting a particular neighborhood under the cover of darkness, catching mice,squirrels and eating carrion,drinking from pools and sprinklers. Then someone spots him during daylight hours and makes a hasty retreat into the house.

The coyote's behavior is being inadvertently positively reinforced by the food he is finding, and by the human's hasty retreat, he learns he has nothing to fear.

Coyotes by nature are not nocturnal. They are canines and are active during the early daylight, afternoon and evening hours. The only reason we usually see them at night is because they are fearful of humans and their activities during the day. When we see them during the day in our neighborhoods, they are becoming desensitized and more comfortable with us. They are extending their territories and we are allowing it. In the animal world it's all about space, boundaries and behavior, and we need to reinforce to them in a language that they will understand that our yards are off limits. The longer wild animals are allowed to continue their undesirable behaviors, the longer it will take to recondition them.

Identify what is attracting the animal to the property. Usually it is a multitude of factors, so make sure all are corrected at the same time. Have some negative reinforcement props by the door and on hand. When the animal enters your yard or space, keep a safe distance away. Make yourself appear larger and louder than he is so he has no choice but to make a hasty retreat, and you need to continue your loud, wild and crazy behavior until you get the proper response from him: a quick retreat.

You have just reclaimed your territory.

All this applies unless the animal is injured or orphaned in that case call a rehabilitation facility for advice.

Prevention

- Bring in all cat and dog food.
- Bird feeders are an attraction and will attract more than just your favorite birds. They will attract rodents and their predators and other seed eating critters.
- Secure trash can lids with bungee cords.
- Bring in all small pets and cats well before sunset and don't let them back out until a few hours after sunrise. And go with them. In some densely populated coyote areas small animals should not be outside alone.
- Secure chicken coops and small animal pens with wire tops and underground wire bottoms to prevent entry from digging under. Pets should have access to safe quarters 24 hours a day. This should include a garage,building or home
- Koi ponds: Submerge chicken wire around the edge of the pool, about 1 foot distance from the side of the pool into the center. Normally raccoons will not step onto a platform that is not stable.
- Sprinkle cayenne pepper sprinkled in area that raccoons are digging up
- Professionally cap chimneys.
- Close off passages to areas beneath porches, attics, cellars or other crawl spaces with heavy-duty wire mesh.
- Prune or remove tree limbs hanging over or close to the building; cut back overgrown vines clinging to walls and eaves.
- Remove all unnecessary outdoor clutter such as old newspaper, paper bags, woodpiles, etc.
- Keep your yard well manicured and free from overgrown plants and grass.
- Use pet doors at your own risk; if conventional ones are used, bolt them tightly at night.
- Build catio (patio) enclosures for small animals

Negative reinforcement props:

noise makers

coffee can filled with small nails or rocks (taped so it can be thrown)

whistles

air horn

radio

automatic motion lights

automatic motion sprinklers

large dogs

power nozzles attached to a hose