WILDLIFE CARE OF VENTURA COUNTY

RESCUE, REHABILITATION AND RELEASE OF INJURED AND ORPHANED WILD ANIMALS

NATURE'S VOICE

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COMING IN APRIL.....

Poisoning our Wildlife

Do we really know the extent of our actions?

www.wildlifecareofventura.org
P.O. Box 941476 Simi Valley, CA 93065
Hotline 805-498-2794

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Understanding the Nature of the Beast... and Human Behavior - it's our choice.

This issue of Nature's Voice will focus on how we can interact with the wildlife around us in beneficial rather than harmful ways. And that the animals don't just get caught in between the wild places and the urban ones - but that they are here with a purpose and doing what they have been conditioned to do... by people.

Feeding wildlife... Why we do it is easy to answer - because we care... that's human nature. We don't want them to starve; we assume there is no food for them and we are well aware they have no place to go and that we are taking all the wild places. So, we empathize, sympathize and mistakenly project our human feelings onto the animals. We put ourselves in the animals' position and we do for them what we would want to have done for us.

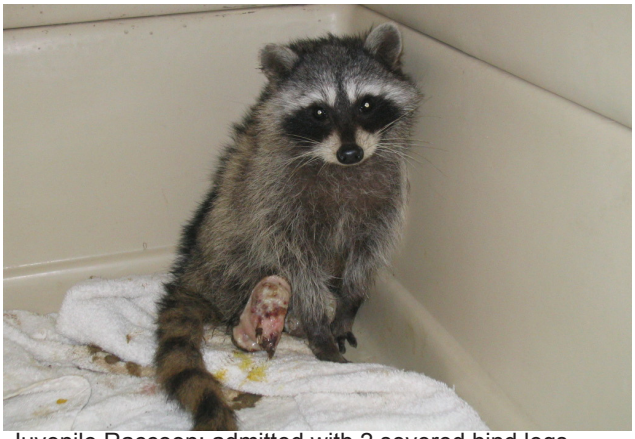
In a wild animal's world which is fast becoming an urban one, what our human instincts direct us to do is not always in the best interest of the animal. When we intentionally or un-intentionally feed the animals, whether we are living in a wildlife area, corridor, foothills or even the city, in essence what we are doing is conditioning or training that animal, be it a coyote, raccoon, opossum, crow or even a bear, that it is safe and beneficial for them to approach human structures and that there are good things to be found there. What we are creating is a wild animal that has no fear of people and has lost the ability or, to be more precise, the need to hunt and forage for natural foods. This is dangerous for them on many levels and, depending on the specie, dangerous for humans too.

Many of these animals are thriving because of urban developments …and in spite of them. Urban developments have much to offer- in the way of agriculture, insects, rodents, etc. And the animals do not need us to interfere with hand outs… the best we can do for them is to allow them to forage and hunt for themselves and remain in their natural wild state, viewing humans as something to be feared. Nature, being a little closer to home these days, includes our backyards, city streets and parks. Our help is definitely needed but not in the capacity or to the extent that it is given. What we need to do is stop poisoning, trapping, feeding, relocating and learn to trust in the natural world to keep things in balance within the urban one…and that is something each one of us can do.

Understanding the nature of the beast - the wild ones and the civilized ones - has to happen before we can all coexist. The effects of feeding wildlife continue well past that brief moment of self satisfaction and enjoyment that we experience while we are in such close contact with them - well past the moment when we have all retired to the comforts and safety of our homes, closing doors behind us - keeping nature at bay and the wild things out.

In those moments we have to ask ourselves, "Are my actions really benefitting the animal or condemning it to a lifetime struggle it is not equipped to win?"

Anna M. Reams



Juvenile Raccoon: admitted with 2 severed hind legs. According to a biologist with the Dept. of Fish and Game, very indicative of a non padded illegal leg hold trap. He was humanely euthanized.

A healthy orphaned baby skunk was released once he was self sufficient - Regulations adhered to by Animal Control is that ALL skunks including babies are euthanized.

Please call a Rehabilitation center directly when these guys are encountered.

Two of six orphaned baby raccoons - The mother raccoon was trapped and relocated. The homeowner was reluctant to allow the mother to relocate her babies on her own..she would have been more than willing to oblige.. with a little nudge.

LEARNING TO LIVE WITH URBAN WILDLIFE

I've got a raccoon in my yard! What do I do?

A raccoon running through your yard or an opossum on your wall is no cause for alarm. Do not over react by assuming that a wild animal in the vicinity is a threat to pets or property. In the vast majority of cases such animals are utterly harmless, and are likely just passing through. Most wild animals that have not been desensitized by close contact with people feeding them are genuinely afraid of humans and will keep their distance. By shooing them away we force them to move on to other areas in search of food and shelter. **If you do choose to live peacefully with these critters, you should avoid regular feeding as this will create a dependence and desensitize wildlife to humans.**

Remember that the person down the road may not be as compassionate as you are. Unfortunately, wild animals that have lost their wariness and have more contacts with humans tend to have shorter life spans. That's because they tend to be our problem or "nuisance" wildlife. They frequently are killed, poisoned, trapped or relocated.

Compassion through education

"Misinformation and our own lack of knowledge about the temperament, nature and needs of urbanized wildlife has led to exaggerated fears, particularly of disease, and subsequently to much unnecessary animal suffering. Fortunately, there is no need to resort to painful traps or deadly poisons in our encounters with these wild animals. We can, with a little effort, learn to peacefully coexist. In fact, armed with some basic knowledge about their habits and a little ingenuity we can outsmart these sometimes pesky critters without bringing harm upon them, nor guilt upon our consciences."

(The San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)

Dr. Thompson of Conejo Valley Vet Clinic examines the leg of a juvenile raccoon. This raccoon was released.

BAD ANIMALS or RESOURCEFUL ONES

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

Animal proofing is fast becoming the preferred method of wildlife "control." 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 erecting physical barriers, you can condition the animals to stay away.** In many cases, by the time the homeowner discovers a nuisance wildlife problem and begins to seek out solutions, the offending wildlife have already been conditioned that their actions can safely be repeated and rewarded.

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 spot to eat also.

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, eating carrion, small pets are missing - missing cat signs are going up. 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 crepuscular, they are active during the early daylight 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 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 or causing the nuisance behavior (check list to the right). Usually it is a multitude of factors, so make sure all are corrected at the same time and have some negative reinforcement props on hand. When the animal enters your space, **do not** corner them, as a cornered wild animal will be more aggressive. 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: retreat. You have just reclaimed your territory.

Prevention: If you do not want these animals sharing your space

1. Bring in all cat and dog food.
2. Bird feeders are an attraction and will attract more than just your favorite birds. They will attract the predators of birds and other seed eating critters.
3. Secure trash can lids with bungee cords.
4. Bring in all small pets and cats well before sunset and don't let them back out until a few hours after sunrise.
5. Secure chicken coops or small animal pens with wire tops and underground wire bottoms to prevent digging under. Pets should have access to safe quarters 24 hours a day. This should include a garage, building or doghouse.
6. 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.

Shelter

1. Professionally cap chimneys.
2. Close off passages to areas beneath porches, attics, cellars or other crawl spaces with heavy-duty wire mesh.
3. Prune or remove tree limbs hanging over or close to the building; cut back overgrown vines clinging to walls and eaves.
4. Remove unnecessary outdoor clutter such as old newspaper, paper bags, woodpiles, etc.
5. Keep your yard well manicured and free from overgrown plants and grass.
6. Use pet doors at your own risk; if conventional ones are used, bolt them tightly at night.

Negative reinforcement props:

noise makers
coffee can filled with small nails or rocks
whistle
horn
radio
ammonia soaked rags
automatic lights
hoses

"IT IS TIME WE LEARNED TO LIVE PEACEFULLY WITH THESE NEW URBAN IMMIGRANTS BY ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES."

#1 Young emaciated coyote pup admitted through West Valley Animal Control with mange and parasites.

#2 Emaciated coyote pup admitted with mange, parasites & infection from bites possibly received from an attack by another coyote or domestic dog. Young coyotes when orphaned will approach domestic dogs in search of help.

Coyote #1, 2 months after intake.. Coyote #2, 1 month later intake..
Both Coyotes will be released healthy and wild.

One of our last enduring symbols of wildness... The Coyote

Coyotes and humans inhabited the same environment long before European settlers arrived in North America. Native American tribes revered the coyote for its intelligent and mischievous nature. In fact, the word coyote is derived from the Aztec coyotl, which loosely translates to "trickster."

Despite attempts to control coyote populations using lethal methods, there are more coyotes in America today than ever before. Clearly, coyotes are here to stay. **Humans must learn to coexist with them.** This used to apply only to farmers ... but now it includes urbanites also. Coyotes play an integral role in their ecosystems, occupying the biological niche between foxes and wolves. Rodents comprise 90% of their diet. A reduction in the numbers of coyotes may cause an explosion of rodents and result in other unexpected consequences.

Coyotes are primarily pack animals. Loners do exist, but are generally found in heavily hunted populations. Because of their strong social hierarchy, reproduction is generally reserved for the pack's leaders, the "alpha" male and female.

As with many wild animals, the coyote's population is naturally regulated when unhampered by humans. Lethal control methods can cause pack members to disperse, resulting in more coyotes reproducing in the absence of a pack hierarchy.

Coyotes are territorial. The territory comprises the pack's regular hunting area. The range of that territory is directly related to the abundance of food and population density, and can be as small as a few square miles or as large as 40. A pack knows the topography of its territory intimately; even young pups have an uncanny awareness of where the best hiding places are, where the trails go and which animals travel them. Adults will patrol these territories nightly. At the heart of the territory lies the pack's "core" area, a smaller, much more intensely guarded zone in which coyotes spend most of their time. Core areas have what are known as biological attraction points, such as food, multiple denning sites, protection from predators and high vantage points with good views of valleys below, but more importantly a vantage point which entertains all the senses - least of which is visual. Because of the upward lift of the land, they can also hear and smell things before they actually see them.

It has been documented by researcher Marc Beckoff in his studies on coyotes that in their detection of prey they utilize their sense of smell and hearing most often before their sight .

Excerpts taken from Animal Protection Institute and World of the Coyote www.api4animals.org

THE AIR SHARES ITS SPIRIT WITH ALL THE LIFE THAT IT SUPPORTS."

CHIEF SEATTLE DWAMISH

Learning to Live with Coyotes

It's all about Space, Boundaries, and Behavior

The Question is not "do you have Coyotes in your area?"

Because they are everywhere, surviving in the hills, foothills, suburbs and inner city, most of us in the areas where the coyote has maintained his fear of people do not see them. They choose to travel under the cover of darkness. We hear them - calling to one another - and if we do see them in the very early morning, they are on the move to get out of our space and back to theirs, which we reinforce by turning on lights, loud noises, etc.

The problem arises when they lose their fear of people and their behavior and habits change, taking advantage of situations they normally would avoid.

The solution is to recognize these signs and changing behaviors as they are occurring, before they escalate into a problem - for people and the coyote.

The Question, "is how are they behaving?"

- **Do you see them during the middle of the day?**
- **Do they stand their ground if approached?**
- **Do they approach you?**
- **Are they too close for comfort?**

If the answer was yes to any of these questions, the coyotes in your area are displaying behaviors that could escalate and become a problem. The time to act is **NOW**. Behavioral problems are easier to avoid with a little education on prevention than they are to correct once a behavior pattern has been established.

Please call (805) 581-3911 for more information.

WHAT WE DON'T UNDERSTAND WE FEAR.....

On June 10, 2005, at 11:45 a.m. I spotted a baby coyote outside my back fence. I watched it for awhile and looked for its mother. There was no sign of another coyote anywhere. The baby was scared and tried to come to my dogs. He was huddled down next to the storm drain, in the wash behind our house, while two Blue Jays were pecking him in the head. I jumped my fence and went up to him and he did not run or even try to get away from me. I carefully got him in a crate and took him home as we fed and gave him water. He was very tired and slept the rest of the day.

We called a wildlife organization to come and get him, but after talking with them and evaluating the situation and because he wasn't injured, they advised that after dark we take the baby back outside to the area where we found him, open the crate and, coyotes being territorial, if his parents were still in the area they would find him. We heard howling at 2:30 a.m. I looked outside and spotted an adult coyote. I got my husband and we took the crate with the baby inside and directed it under the fence. He trotted across the wash and a minute later the adult went after him making a yipping noise. The baby went to the adult coyote and then they ran off together. We are so excited to see him back with his family.

I hope this helps.
Thank you,
Janet and Jeff Hauge

"ALTHOUGH WILDLIFE CARE OF VENTURA COUNTY DOES NOT ADVISE ANYONE TO APPROACH OR HANDLE WILD ANIMALS, WE FELT THIS STORY WAS TYPICAL OF MANY SITUATIONS THAT PEOPLE FIND THEMSELVES IN. WE NEED TO BE AWARE THAT THESE ANIMALS ARE LIVING AMONGST US AND AT TIMES JUST GET SEPARATED FROM THEIR PARENTS AND BEFORE INTERVENTION IS EXECUTED - CALL A WILDLIFE ORGANIZATION TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER AN INTERVENTION IS WARRANTED." WCVC

Following an educational program at McAuliffe school in Oxnard, Jeanette Feeney asked her 6th grade class to write an essay and to include three things that they had learned.

1) "Opossums are not picky eaters at all; they will eat bugs and mice. Everyone also thinks they are mean; they are not mean at all." Sydney Smith

2) "Opossums adapt very well to changes in their habitat. They learn to do things differently; that way they can survive." Odie Meyer

Sierra - our three year old non releasable bobcat, will be on medication for the rest of her life, due to seizures. She continues to be an ambassador for her specie.

Three things I learned was that every day there are animals that suffer and die; that we take over all of the homes of animals; that animals are very important to us. I liked it a lot. I mostly liked the bobcat. I wonder why anyone or anything would want to hurt such innocent animals? The bobcat reminded me of my cat, Dorsha. Now I know that animals suffered a lot because of us. I feel so sorry for them. I think we should stop all of our ruining of forests. It's not fair that we took everything from them.

Poor animals, maybe 200 years later we will have no animals left.

I'm not sure how we can stop from destroying wildlife. We need a place to live, but we can't help it. I would love to save the animals but don't know how. Anna and Stacy are really nice to help.

Animals are important to us because if they are not there we can't live. We need animals for food. We need animals for many other things that we need. We even need the ugly, creepy and nasty animals. Even if they are bad. All the animals I saw that day are cute.

Yuying Guo

YES, I WANT TO HELP NATIVE WILDLIFE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

REMEMBER BABY BOB! .....

..... RELEASED 2005!

RELEASED ORPHANED RACCOONS

WE CANNOT DO THE WORK WE DO WITHOUT ALL OF YOU. THANK YOU! FOR ALL YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

Your donation of $25.00 or more will entitle you to continue to receive our semi-annual newsletter!
WCVC is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax-deductible.

$25.00 _____ $35.00 _____
$50.00 _____ 100.00_____
$_____ Other Amount

_____ I would like to help care for wild birds or small mammals in my home.
_____ I would like to assist other rehabbers a few hours a week.
_____ I would enjoy transporting animals to local veterinarians or wildlife rehabilitators.
_____ I would like information on WCVC's wildlife educational presentations. Meet your wild neighbors up close and personal!
_____ I would like information on a program for my area on **COYOTE AWARENESS.**

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
_____
PHONE NUMBER: _____

PLEASE MAIL TO :
Wildlife Care of Ventura County
P.O. Box 941476
Simi Valley, CA 93065

WCVC is permitted through the State Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and USDA.

SMALL WISHES	BIG DREAMS
Nutros Dog Food	Land
Fishing Nets	Printing Costs (Up to $1,000)
Water Bottles	Insurance For One Year ($850.00)
Critter Carriers	5,000 Business Cards ($150.00)
Dog Igloos	Newsletter ($600.00)
Gram Scales	
Pedigree Dog Food	
Heating Pads	

SPECIAL FRIENDS OF WCVC

Conejo Valley Veterinarian Clinic
Bear Thompson, DVM
June Yanaginuma
Audoubon Society of W. Hollywood
Jack Edelstein
Robb Quint / Jerry Burns
Lowell Novy, DVM
Verizon Foundation - Pat Katz
Los Angeles Zoo
Thousand Oaks Rotary
Jean Marie Webster
Stevens Nursery
Full O Life
Googalone Inc.
Wilbur Prim

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P.O. BOX 941476, SIMI VALLEY CA 93065

POSTAGE

Sarah and Andrew Basden enjoy making bird feeders with Alan Pollack at the Oxnard Farmers Market.

WILDLIFE CARE OF VENTURA COUNTY

WCVC is a non-profit all volunteer organization holding permits through the California Department of Fish and Game, United States Fish and Wildlife and USDA. The organization was founded in 1994 and rehabilitates all native wildlife with the exception of bear, mountain lion and deer.

Our volunteers specialize in one or more species and operate as a team of dedicated and highly trained individuals.

We work very closely with veterinarians who provide medical care, x-rays, surgery and humane euthanasia when necessary. Beyond the immediate benefits of helping wildlife in need, WCVC provides a valuable service to the entire community by making help accessible to those who find wildlife in distress. Our mission is to rescue, rehabilitate and release, as well as educating the public on how to co-exist with our wild neighbors.

BOOTH DATES:

** 2ND WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH AT THE NORTHRIDGE FARMERS MARKET

** 2ND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH AT THE OXNARD FARMERS MARKET

FACTS ABOUT WILDLIFE:

* Coyote newborns weigh about 7-10 ounces
* Coyotes can run at most 40 mph & jump over a 8' fence.
* Coyotes are a close cousin of all pet dogs. The coyote's scientic name (canis la trans) means "barking dog."
* Coyote is one of the few wild animals whose vocalizations are commonly heard.
* Coyotes, as you would think, are mainly carnivores, but they will also eat fruit and insects.
* There may be as many as 8,000 raccoons living in large cities.
* Raccoons never den more than 1,200 feet from a water source.

"WHAT WOULD OUR LIVES BE LIKE IF EARTH'S WILD AND BEAUTIFUL CREATURES WERE NOT A PART OF IT". ALAN POLLACK