Wildlife-Friendly Tree Maintenance

Davis supports a magnificent urban forest. This forest is collectively made of trees growing along streets and greenbelts, in parks, and on residential and commercial properties. Maintenance of these trees is often necessary to support tree health and vigor, and/or protect near-by structures and public safety. However, tree maintenance activity can harm nesting wildlife if not done thoughtfully.

There are many species of birds that nest in the Davis urban forest. Most of these birds build or use existing stick nests on the branches of trees. Some choose to nest in cavities within the tree trunk. Some, like barn owls, often nest in the dead fronds of palm trees. The breeding season for most species is from March to August. Pruning or tree removal during this time presents a risk of directly killing or injuring birds, their nestlings or eggs. Nesting adult birds may even abandon their eggs or offspring if there is elevated disturbance in or nearby the nest tree. Birds and their nests are protected by state and federal laws.

So how do we maintain our trees without harming wildlife? Timing is everything in this case. By simply scheduling tree maintenance during the non-breeding season (September thru February) we can ensure the least amount of disturbance to nesting birds. Pruning during a tree’s dormancy period can lessen related stress on the tree. Stick nests that can be reused during the next breeding season can also be more easily seen and avoided after the leaves have dropped.

Tips for wildlife-friendly tree maintenance:

- Ensure that the tree maintenance or removal is absolutely necessary. Consult an arborist to advise on tree health or public safety concerns.
- Tree maintenance or removal should only occur between September and February.
- Hawks and owls often reuse old stick nests. Avoid removing them if possible.
- If you must conduct tree maintenance during the spring and summer months, have a qualified wildlife biologist survey the tree for nests. Do not disturb the tree if nests are present. Nests are protected by state and federal law and destroying them is a misdemeanor.
- Contact the Davis Wildlife Resource Specialist if you find injured or dead wildlife 530-757-5686
Upcoming Events

September 24: Pollinator Gardening Workshop
Join the Yolo County Master Gardeners and horticulture experts from the UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden for a workshop on creating pollinator-friendly habitats in your home landscape. Learn about locally-appropriate plants for attracting hummingbirds, bees and butterflies. The City of Davis will have a table with water-wise landscaping information. Participants will have the opportunity to tour the UC Davis Arboretum’s newest pollinator-friendly gardens. The event will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Visit the Arboretum and Public Garden webpage, http://publicgarden.ucdavis.edu/calendar, for more information and location map.

UC Davis Arboretum Fall Plant Sales
Find native, drought tolerant, pollinator and wildlife-friendly plants at the UC Davis Arboretum Fall Plant Sales. Master Gardeners and other professionals will be on hand to answer your gardening questions. Visit the Public Works table to learn about the City’s Environmental Resources programs. Plant sale dates: Saturday, October 7, 2017 (9 – 11 a.m. members only; 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. open to public), Saturday, October 21, 2017 and Saturday, November 4, 2017 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information and location map, visit http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu.

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