



URBAN WILDLIFE 101



Public Works Utilities and Operations
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URBAN WILDLIFE PROGRAM

The City's **Urban Wildlife Program** is responsible for wildlife and wildlife habitat conservation, planning and management. The program consists of a single full-time employee.

The Urban Wildlife Program's Responsibilities Include:

- Developing and implementing management plans for the City's habitat areas
- Monitoring local protected species
- Assisting City operations with the protection of wildlife resources
- Implementing the City's urban wildlife management plans for turkeys and coyotes
- Providing habitat via the installation of artificial nest boxes for a variety of cavity nesting birds
- Conducting outreach and assistance to best balance human and wildlife interactions
- Reviewing development and demolition plans for impacts on wildlife and habitats and ensuring appropriate mitigation
- Coordinating with county, state and federal wildlife agencies for the enforcement of wildlife regulations
- Working with local partners in support of wildlife and their habitats



Program Partners

The Urban Wildlife Program works closely with various agencies and non-profit groups. Some of these are listed below along with a brief detail of the City's involvement.

- Yolo Basin Foundation – Wetlands Docent program and other programs
- Putah Creek Council – Pond and creek clean up events
- California Raptor Center, NorCal Bat Rescue, Wildlife Care Association – Rehabilitation of sick or injured wildlife
- Yolo Habitat Conservancy – Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan Administration
- Yolo County Sheriff Animal Services – Assist urgent wildlife response
- CA Department of Fish and Wildlife – Regulation enforcement, permitting and wild turkey translocation



Did You Know? A barn owl family can eat thousands of rats and mice in one year. Always be mindful of what you use to deal with pests. If a barn owl eats a rodent poisoned with rodenticide, it will become very sick and die.

LOCAL URBAN WILDLIFE: THE ANIMALS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

We share our community with hundreds of species of birds, mammals, amphibians, fish and reptiles. Some are very obvious and may be seen regularly in and around town. Others are more shy or secretive and may be difficult to find. Below is a list of some of the animals that may be seen around Davis.

Mammals

Besides humans, Davis is home to many mammals. Here are a few you may see around town:

- California ground squirrel
- Opossum
- Raccoon
- Desert cottontail rabbit
- Sacramento Valley red fox
- Coyote
- Pallid bat
- Striped skunk



Birds

Birds are abundant in Davis. You'll likely see many in every park and possibly even in your yard. Here are some of the birds you may see around Davis:

- American Crow
- Canada Goose
- Wild Turkey
- Anna's hummingbird
- Northern flicker
- Barn swallow
- Red-winged blackbird
- American kestrel
- Turkey vulture
- Swainson's hawk
- Red-tailed hawk
- Barn owl
- Great-horned owl
- Cattle egret



Fish

The local ponds, wetlands and waterways in and around Davis contain some fish species. Below are a few species that may be found here. Fishing is not allowed within the City limits or at the City Wetlands:

- Large mouth bass
- Bluegill
- Carp
- Catfish
- Mosquito fish



Amphibians and Reptiles

Here are a few amphibians and reptiles that live in Davis:

- American bullfrog
- Sierran chorus frog
- Gopher snake
- Common garter snake
- Giant garter snake
- Western kingsnake
- Western pond turtle
- Red-eared slider
- Western fence lizard



PLANNING FOR THE PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE

Urban Wildlife Program staff works to support the City of Davis' General Plan Goals and Objectives for the conservation of habitat in and around Davis. Staff also helps to guide municipal operations and maintenance to avoid or reduce impacts to wildlife and their habitat during operational activities or development projects.

City Operations: Working Around Wildlife

Maintenance work in Davis, especially major vegetation modification, disking/tilling, channel dredging and debris removal on City property may cause impacts to wildlife by reducing habitat suitability and availability, especially in the short-term. While performing municipal operations and maintenance, staff works to avoid disturbance where feasible and when these activities could have negative impacts to wildlife or habitat. Some examples include:

- Training is provided for crews on detecting nests in trees and other vegetation.
- Major tree pruning work is scheduled when possible during non-breeding season for nesting birds.
- The City's Ecological Resources Program Manager is included during planning activities to identify potential conflicts with wildlife resources.
- Biological resource surveys of vegetation and building exteriors are conducted prior to maintenance activities to avoid impacting wildlife resources when possible.



Development Plan Reviews

Program staff reviews all demolition, development and capitol improvement plans for impacts on sensitive wildlife, plants and habitats. Staff ensures that California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents adequately evaluate and mitigate project impacts on biological resources.



Did you know? The Davis Downtown Specific Plan requires window treatments on tall buildings to reduce bird strike hazards.





URBAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Conducting Surveys

Surveys and monitoring help the City keep track of where wildlife are living, how well they are doing and how we can better protect them. Urban Wildlife Program staff are trained in wildlife and habitat survey methodology and can be found in the field performing various tasks, including:

- Sampling the Wetlands invertebrate and avian eggs for bioaccumulated metals
- Surveying the habitat quality and management at the Yolo Grasslands Burrowing Owl Preserve and other open space areas
- Monitoring capitol Improvement projects, both during pre-construction and construction
- Surveying sensitive bird nesting sites
- Conducting the wild turkey population census
- Assessing habitat quality in local stormwater detention basins

Wildlife Rescue

Staff frequently responds to assist sick or injured wildlife. Sometimes when a raptor nest is blown down or falls apart before the nestling birds are fully fledged, urban wildlife staff will place a basket in the tree so that the birds have a safe place to finish growing up.



Nuisance Wildlife Control

Certain species of wildlife can become a nuisance to property owners. Wildlife Program staff helps to educate the community about coexistence methods. A few species are difficult for individual property owners to control which require a coordinated community effort to reduce their numbers or modify behavior for easier coexistence.



Did you know? The Our Water Our World website (OurWaterOurWorld.org) has great information on least toxic alternatives to deal with rats, mice, voles, moles and gophers.



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLANS SPOTLIGHT: TURKEYS

Since 2006, Davis has seen an increase in the number of wild turkeys. With the increased urban turkey population comes community concerns regarding aesthetic impacts (feces, vehicle and landscape damage), traffic safety issues and aggressive encounters. In order to address the growing turkey population and associated community impacts, the City created a Turkey Management Plan in 2008. The plan was updated in 2016.

Turkey Management Strategies

Strategy 1: Reduce public safety and aesthetic impacts by trapping and relocating as many individuals as possible. Monitor and maintain a population below an action threshold of 80 individuals citywide, but no less than 10 individuals.

Strategy 2: Selectively remove overly aggressive individuals via trap and relocate or cull.

Strategy 3: Continue to promote natural predators of wild turkeys by enforcing existing policy that protects nesting birds-of-prey and coyote coexistence.

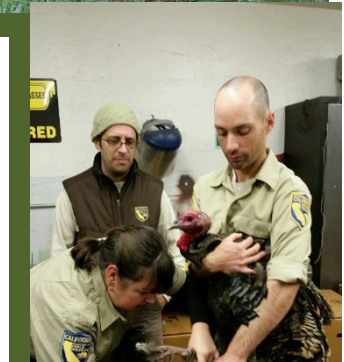
Strategy 4: Provide educational materials on hazing methods and the hazards of feeding wildlife. Distribute to community members, focusing on impacted neighborhoods. Facilitate community meetings within impacted neighborhoods to demonstrate hazing methods.

Strategy 5: Post advisory signage at busy road crossings and in locations where aggressive turkeys occur to warn motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians of associated hazards.

Strategy 6: Investigate and draft a "No Feeding Turkeys" ordinance if feasible.

Turkey Capture and Relocation

Until 2023, City staff have worked with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to capture and release 32 wild turkeys from Davis. The turkeys were checked to ensure they were healthy prior to release on publicly accessible habitat areas. Unfortunately, the capture and release program is costly and only temporarily effective. As of 2024, the program is on hold per CDFW.



Did you know? It is illegal to trap and relocate animals without approval from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. This includes nuisance species like squirrels and raccoons.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLANS SPOTLIGHT: COYOTES

In 2013, the City adopted a Coyote Management Plan to support coexistence with urban coyotes. The plan uses education, coyote behavior modification and a tiered response to aggressive coyote behavior. The tiered response requires active participation on the part of the entire community including residents, wildlife volunteers and City staff.

Management Plan Elements

The City's strategy for managing coyotes is based on balancing respect and protection for wildlife and their habitats without compromising public safety. The main strategy is comprised of a three-pronged approach consisting of public education designed around coexistence with coyotes, investigating coyote sightings and implementing hazing as needed, and ensuring public safety by implementing appropriate responses to rare aggressive interaction or attack by a coyote on a human.



Keeping Pets Safe

Coyotes are opportunistic predators and will capture and eat all kinds of animals including pet cats, rabbits and chickens. Keep pets safe by keeping them indoors or in predator proof structures when outdoors.

The Benefits of Coyotes

Coyotes are a vital part of our local ecosystems. Without coyotes, the populations of prey species (e.g. ground squirrels, mice, voles, etc.) increases significantly, causing increased grazing on grasses, shrubs and trees, reducing habitat quality and species diversity. Suppressing top predators such as coyotes may also contribute to the increase in numbers of residential "nuisance" species, such as turkeys, skunks and raccoons.



Did you know?

Coyotes do not hunt in packs like their cousin the grey wolf. Instead they forage alone or in pairs.





WHO YOU GONNA CALL? SICK OR INJURED WILDLIFE

Sick or injured wildlife should always be approached with caution. Animals that are sick or injured are particularly defensive and more likely to bite if handled. Bites from wildlife are painful and may transmit harmful diseases. Depending on the species of animal, there are different contacts for assistance. Please see the table below:

Animal	Who To Contact For Rescue
Skunks and foxes	Yolo County Animal Services YoloCountySheriff.com/Contact-Us 530-668-5287
Bats	NorCal Bat Rescue NorCalBats.org 530-902-1918
Hawks, owls, or other birds-of-prey	California Raptor Center CRC.VetMed.UCDavis.edu 530-752-6091
All other wildlife	Wildlife Care Association WildlifeCareAssociation.com/Found-Animal 916-965-9453



Did you know?

Often times, an animal that may appear to be "orphaned" is safe, but perhaps a bit out of place. Was the animal brought to you by a pet? Is it naked and shaking? If yes, it likely needs help.

SPOTLIGHT: Does a Baby Bird Need Help?

When birds are nesting, young birds may be found out of the nest as they learn to fly and feed on their own. However, the bird may not need our help.

Picture A: Featherless/Newly Hatched (Hatchling) Birds: If the bird is not injured, locate the nest and place the young bird back inside. Birds are unable to detect your scent on their young. After you leave, they will quickly forget your intrusion. Be sure to place the bird in the correct nest (as parents may toss out unfamiliar babies).

Downy/Incompletely Feathered (Nestling) Birds (**Picture B**): These are older birds, not quite ready to fly. Find the nest, and place the young back in it unless the bird is injured. If you cannot locate the nest or it is out of reach, the bird should be placed in wildlife care (see contact info above).

Fully Feathered (Fledgling) Birds (**Picture C**): These birds are completely feathered, can hop about and may be able to flutter or fly short distances. Leave them alone unless they are being attacked by a dog or cat. They should be left on the ground (to be fed and protected by their parents) unless they are injured or in imminent danger.





LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

Sharing the Land

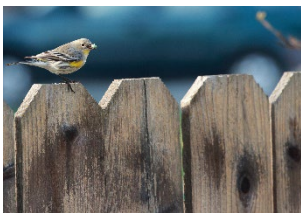
Before European settlement, the Davis area was oak savannah and riparian habitat and home to a vast number of species. Humans have both created and removed habitat in and around Davis. The wildlife that adapted well are the ones we now see in our yards, parks and open areas. All of them are just trying to survive and live their lives, much the same as the rest of us. Try to give them space and find ways to peacefully coexist with our wild neighbors.



Benefits of Local Wildlife

Many species of urban wildlife provide important ecological services that either directly or indirectly benefit their human neighbors. These benefits include:

- Turkeys, skunks and opossums eat slugs, snails, ticks and cockroaches.
- Coyotes control the populations of small rodents like rats and mice.
- Bats, phoebes and swallows eat large volumes of flies, mosquitos and insects that are considered pests in our homes, gardens and nearby agricultural fields.



Tips For Living With Wildlife

While they may be fun to spot wandering around the neighborhood, you probably do not want a squirrel, raccoon, skunk or other wildlife to take up residence in your attic, shed or garage. You can discourage these and other wild creatures by removing cover, food and water from locations where wildlife are not welcome. Here are some helpful tips:

- Patch holes around structures that are larger than 1/4 inch
- Prune landscaping to keep it at least 4 feet away from structures
- Place netting at locations where bats or swallows roost to discourage them from coming back
- Use mesh or netting around solar panels to keep pigeons from nesting under solar panels
- Do not leave your pet's food or water bowls outside where they may attract wildlife



Did you know? One Mexican free-tailed bat mother can consume her own weight in agricultural pest insects each night.

PROBLEMS WITH FEEDING WILDLIFE

Intentionally or unintentionally feeding wildlife may not seem like a big deal, but it is the primary cause of conflict between humans and wildlife. Feeding wildlife will alter their normal behavioral patterns, may make them sick and potentially worst of all, can make them less fearful of humans, which is dangerous for all of us. **It can be hard to resist feeding wildlife, but please don't do it, first and foremost for the animal's health and safety. The animals are capable of finding their own food.**

Why is Feeding Wildlife a Problem?

- "People" food and domesticated pet food aren't good for animals. Eating food not meant for them may cause serious health problems.
- The animals you feed today will likely become "pests" tomorrow when they lose their natural fear of humans and approach other people boldly to look for food. This can also put small pets at risk.
- Wild animals who depend on people for food can cause injuries or spread disease, both to other animals and people.
- Feeding wild animals causes an unnaturally vigorous population growth. Unfortunately, the reverse is true as well. If the food is removed (when people stop feeding the animals, move away or when the feeder runs out) the animals will begin to starve and the population can crash.



What About Bird Feeders?

Watching birds come to a bird feeder in your yard can be very relaxing and enjoyable, however if the feeder is not properly managed, it can cause harm to wildlife and lead to human-wildlife conflict.

- Clean and refresh feeders weekly to reduce disease transmission.
- Clean-up spilled seed from under feeders to avoid problems with rats, raccoons, turkeys, etc.
- Water fountains for birds are readily used by wildlife. Keep cats indoors if you provide wildlife attractants.



LENDING A HAND

HOW YOU CAN HELP

This guide helps highlight many great things you can do to help support wildlife. There are also lots of great volunteer opportunities for folks wanting to get involved.

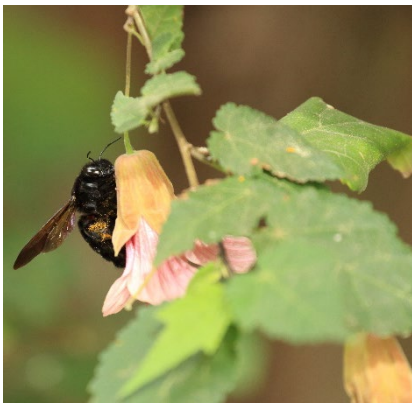
Helping From Home

If you would like to encourage wildlife to use your yard as a sanctuary, you can provide cover, appropriate food sources and water. Here are some helpful tips:

- Plant pollinator-friendly plants that attract and feed bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.
- Grow milkweed for monarch butterflies.
- Keep cats indoors – even a well fed cat can kill wildlife.
- Use less-toxic pest control methods. Visit OurWaterOurWorld.org for details.
- Don't prune or remove trees during the bird breeding season (February through August, annually).
- Make and install bird boxes, owl boxes and/or bat boxes in your yard.
- Volunteer at a local organization that supports wildlife. See the list to the right.



Local Organizations Supporting Wildlife, Habitat and Environmental Education



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