



CAUTION

Feeding may harm wildlife and is a serious threat to aviation safety.



ALL FEEDING IS PROHIBITED





THE HAZARDS OF FEEDING WILDLIFE

Many people enjoy feeding wildlife because it allows them to have close contact or because they believe they are helping the animals. While seeing wild animals up close can be enjoyable, providing wild animals with a steady, human supplied food source nearly always leads to problems for both the animals and humans.

There are many good reasons not to feed wildlife including:



flickr.com/Alan Light



flickr.com/Park Ranger

- **Feeding increases the chance of disease transmission to wildlife, people and pets.** When food is readily available, animals will gather in abnormally large numbers. By gathering animals together in unnatural groups, diseases can spread much more quickly.
- **Feeding can create unintended conflicts with humans.** Wild animals that are used to being fed by humans commonly lose their fear of people. Animals that are unafraid of people will approach them for food, and are sometimes mistaken as rabid, aggressive or mean, then killed for that behavior. An instinctive wariness of people is important to a wild animal's survival.
- **Feeding can degrade surrounding native habitat.** Wildlife habitat is negatively impacted when animals are unnaturally concentrated in areas where feeding occurs. Reproduction rates may also be affected when an artificial food source is readily available. In the wild, the number of animals being born is often directly related to the amount of natural food available. The number of animals surviving will also depend on how much food is available. This is nature's way of keeping a balance.
- **Feeding can lead to unhealthy animals and foraging habits.** Animals who are raised relying on humans for food may struggle to survive in the absence of that food source when they disperse from their parents' territory. Additionally, wild animals need a variety of foods in their diet, if they fill up on human provided food they will not get the nutrients needed to stay healthy.

The best thing you can do to care for the wild animals on your property is to give them habitat, not handouts. [Naturescaping](#) is a great way to provide the animals with natural sources of food and shelter that will not put them in danger the way a human provided food source will. You will still be able to enjoy wildlife on your property, but at a safe distance for both you and the animals.

General Considerations for Handling Wildlife

1. Working with wildlife puts individuals at greater risk of being exposed to certain zoonotic diseases. Considering getting the following vaccinations:
 - [Tetanus vaccine](#): protects against spores of the tetanus bacteria that is commonly found in soil. Once vaccinated, a booster is needed every 10 years.
 - [Rabies vaccine](#): protects against the rabies virus which is spread through the saliva of an infected animal. The rabies vaccine consists of a series of three doses: the initial dose, 7 days after the initial dose, and 21 or 28 days after the initial dose. Booster shots are then given as needed.
2. Carry a wallet medical card that explains to medical personnel that you work with wildlife and could have been exposed to a zoonotic disease.
3. Ensure that you have the proper personal protective equipment such as:
 - Latex or nitrile gloves
 - Facemasks/ventilators
 - Eye protection
 - First-aid kit
4. Be aware of your surroundings and ensure that you have the proper equipment to safely handle the situation prior to acting.
5. Wear gloves when handling wildlife regardless of whether the animal is alive or dead.
6. Thoroughly wash hands after coming into contact with an animal.
7. Clothes, shoes, and vehicles should be thoroughly cleaned as they may be contaminated.

General Ways to Prevent Conflicts with Wildlife

Most nuisance complaints about wildlife in urban and suburban areas stem from animals accessing a food source. Wildlife accessing a food source (unsecured garbage, pet food or birdseed) is not considered property damage and a depredation permit should not be issued. Instead recommend securing the food source.

1. Pet food:
 - Feed pets indoors whenever possible.
 - If pets must be fed outside, supervise the food to ensure that wildlife does not have access to it. Do not leave food out overnight or unattended.
 - When the pets are done eating, clean up any excess or spilled food. Bring the food bowls inside or wash the bowls before putting them back outside. Empty bowls that smell like food will still attract animals into the area.
2. Garbage:
 - Keep garbage in metal cans with tight lids.
 - If possible, keep garbage inside a shed or garage where animals will not have access to the trashcans.
 - Use bungee cords, ratchet straps, or latches to modify garbage cans and prevent animals from getting inside.

3. Birdfeeders:
 - As an alternative to using birdfeeders, consider growing native plants that will attract a variety of birds into the area. The Audubon Society created a native plant database (<https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>) that shows which birds are attracted to each plant.
 - Hang birdfeeders in trees away from houses. This will help keep animals from associating houses/porches with a food source.
 - Use baffles, trays, caging, or weight sensitive feeders to prevent non-target animals from having access to the birdseed.
 - Regularly clean birdfeeders with a 10% bleach solution to help prevent spread of diseases.
4. Do not feed any animals by leaving out food scraps.
5. Electric fencing can deter wildlife from beehives, gardens, and other food sources. Ensure that electric fences are properly built for the species you are trying to deter.
6. Maintain lawns by removing debris, structures in disuse, wood piles, or mulch piles which can make ideal shelters for wildlife.
7. Animals will often dig small holes to eat grubs that are in the ground. There are registered pesticides that can be applied to lawn to treat for grubs. Ensure that pesticides are applied properly and in accordance to the directions on the label. Licensing from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is required to apply pesticides to an individual's yard for compensation. For questions regarding these licenses call (919) 733-3556.
8. Airhorns, whistles, noisemakers, and banging pots and pans or trashcan lids can scare animals out of the area. For harassment to be effective, it should begin as soon as the animal comes into the area and persistently used every time the animal returns.
9. If animals are going underneath structures, place a radio, tuned to a talk station, near the access point to make animals feel threatened and deter them from returning. Once vacated, use chicken wire or hardware cloth to prevent future access.

Euthanizing Animals

1. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has established guidelines on how to humanely euthanize animals. To view this document, click [here](#). Please note that use of inhumane methods of euthanasia (drowning, smothering, freezing, etc.) will result in enforcement action and potential loss of certification.
2. Be aware of local ordinances that prevent certain methods of take (ex. discharging a firearm within city limits).
3. Animals in the order Carnivora, armadillos, groundhogs, nutria, and beaver must be released on site or humanely euthanized at the capture site or taken to a facility designed to humanely handle the euthanasia. For animals that can be relocated, they may be released on private property with permission of the landowner. Written permission must be obtained from the appropriate government entity before an animal is released onto public land.

Important Contacts

[Regulated Actives and Permits Section \(RAPS\)](#) – Handles all WDCA certifications and can answer questions regarding any regulated activity outside of hunting, fishing, and trapping. RAPS can be contacted Monday- Friday 8 AM - 5 PM by calling (919) 707-0061 or emailing raps@ncwildlife.org.

Wildlife Helpline – The Wildlife Helpline is staffed by three biologists that can answer questions about identification, behavior/biology, injured/orphaned, or nuisance wildlife. Individuals can call the Helpline Monday-Friday 8AM- 5PM at (866) 318-2401 or email at wildlifehelpline@ncwildlife.org.

[Wildlife Enforcement Officers \(WEO\)](#) – There are usually 1 or 2 WEOs per county. WEOs can write depredation permits for all species except for black bears.

[District Biologists \(DB\)](#) - There are 9 DBs that each cover 9-12 counties. DBs can write state depredation permits for every species and are the only individuals that can write permits for black bear.

[United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services \(USDA WS\)](#) – USDA WS aids in the procurement of federal depredation permits for migratory birds through the United States Fish and Wildlife Services (US FWS) in Atlanta, Georgia. USDA WS also has assistance programs for certain species such as vultures, feral swine, Canada geese, and beavers.

[Wildlife Rehabilitators](#) – There are licensed wildlife rehabilitators across the state that can take in injured or orphaned wildlife. Always contact a rehabilitator prior to bringing them an animal to ensure they are able to take it in.

[County Health Department](#) – If removing a potentially rabid animal that a person or unvaccinated pet was exposed to contact the County Health Department to determine how to get the animal tested.

Muscovy Ducks

Muscovy ducks have naturally expanded their range from Mexico into the southernmost part of Texas. Muscovy ducks were added to the list of birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 2010 due to this expansion. However, these ducks are popular in the pet trade, so depredation order 50 CFR 21.54 allows removal of Muscovy ducks outside of where they naturally occur. Any Muscovy ducks in North Carolina are considered released domestics.

What is the common damage caused by Muscovy ducks? People often become upset by ducks that utilize and defecate in their pools. Muscovy ducks may become nuisances by staying around yards without fear of people.

Can a WCA write a depredation permit? A WCA does not need to write a state depredation permit for Muscovy ducks since they are not native wildlife in NC. No federal permit is required for Muscovy ducks under depredation order 50 CFR 21. 54.

Can Muscovy ducks be relocated? No, under depredation order 50 CFR 21.54 you may not release a Muscovy duck in any location other than the capture site. They must be released on site, euthanized at the capture site, or taken to a facility designed to humanely handle the euthanasia.

What can I do with sick or injured Muscovy ducks? Muscovy ducks are non-native in North Carolina. It is not recommended that they be rehabilitated. Advise individuals to leave the bird alone to see if it can recover on its own. If the bird has a life-threatening injury or illness it should be humanely euthanized and disposed of in a safe and sanitary manner.

Are there any safety concerns? No, however it is good practice to wear gloves when handling any animal.

Non-lethal Options:

- Harassment
 - Dogs, lasers, and loud noises can deter ducks. This is most effective when they have just begun to land on someone's property.
- Landscape modification
 - Ducks prefer water bodies that are surrounded by short grassy areas that allow them to have a place to rest and graze. This makes manicured lawns around retention ponds ideal habitat. Planting tall grasses or trees around a pond or installing fencing can make an area less desirable to ducks. To learn more click [here](#).
 - Ducks prefer gradually sloping grassy areas around the water sources. Using riprap or creating a steep slope can be effective in deterring them.

Lethal Options:

- A state depredation permit is not required to take Muscovy ducks.
- Federal permits in NC are not required under depredation order [50 CFR 21.54](#).
 - Anywhere in the contiguous United States except in Hidalgo, Starr, and Zapata Counties in Texas and in Alaska Hawaii and U.S. territories and possessions, landowners and Federal, State, Tribal, and local wildlife management agencies, their tenants, employees

or agents may, without a Federal permit, remove or destroy Muscovy ducks and their nests or eggs at any time when found.

- You may donate Muscovy ducks taken under this permit to public museums or institutions for scientific or educational purposes, or you dispose of them by burying or incinerating them. You may not retain for personal use or consumption, offer for sale, or sell a Muscovy duck removed under the authority of this section, nor may you release it in any other location.



Nonnative Birds

Eurasian collared doves, European starlings, house sparrows, mute swans, and pigeons (see Pigeon section for more information) are not native species. They are not protected under the jurisdiction of the Wildlife Resources Commission, nor are they protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In North Carolina, there are established breeding populations of house sparrows, European starlings, and Eurasian collared doves. Mute swans will occasionally come into NC from northern breeding populations, but there are no records of breeding pairs in NC. Mute swans may also be released/escaped pets. Mute swans should not be confused with [tundra swans](#) which are a native migratory bird. Mute swans are much larger than tundra swans and have an orange bill.

What is the common damage caused by these birds? House sparrows, European starlings, and Eurasian collared doves will roost in large flocks, potentially becoming nuisances. House sparrows will sometimes nest in vents leading into houses. Mute swans can be very aggressive when approached and have no fear of people if they are released as pets.

Can a WCA write a depredation permit? A WCA does not need a state or federal depredation permit to remove any nonnative species.

Can nonnative birds be relocated? No, nonnative species cannot be relocated.

What can I do with sick or injured nonnative bird? These species are considered exotic and invasive. It is not recommended that they be rehabilitated. Advise individuals to leave the bird alone to see if it can recover on its own. If the bird has a life-threatening injury or illness it should be humanely euthanized and disposed of in a safe and sanitary manner.

Are there any safety concerns? No, however it is good practice to wear gloves when handling any animal.

Non-lethal Options:

- Exclusion
 - Covering vents with a fine mesh (less than $\frac{3}{4}$ ") will prevent house sparrows from getting inside homes to nest.
 - House sparrows can be deterred from bird feeders by using monofilament [halos](#) around the feeder.
- Harassment
 - Visual or noise deterrents are most effective when birds begin landing in an area. If they have been in the area for a while, harassment becomes less effective.
- Landscape modification
 - Swans prefer gradually sloping grassy areas around water sources, making it easier for them to move from water to land. Using riprap or creating a steep slope can be effective at making the landscape less attractive.
 - Removing submerged aquatic vegetation will remove the swans' food source.

Lethal Options:

- No permits are needed to remove any of the listed species.
 - Check with local ordinances to ensure there are no local laws preventing take.
- Active nests are not protected under the migratory bird treaty act and can be removed at any time.
- Birds can be trapped and removed without any additional licensing.