A new Web site helps homeowners coexist with wildlife, especially in urban areas.

Living with Wildlife in Illinois

Story By Kathy Andrews

(Photos by Adele Hodde.)

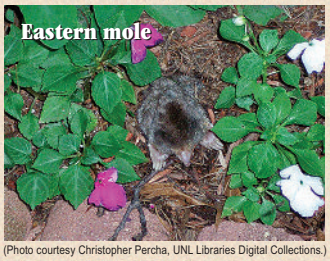
Knowing how to deal with unwelcome wildlife is the first step in solving nuisance animal problems.

Sooner or later everyone has an encounter with wildlife being where they don't want them. In the attic or the garden. Eating the silks off the sweet corn or the pricey ornamental shrubs.

You may have spent the better portion of a day on the phone, trying to find a nuisance wildlife control operator to trap the beaver cutting trees along your river-front property.

Friends and family have offered every home remedy to keep moles out of your prized rose bed. What really works?

Sooner or later everyone has an encounter, but just how prevalent are nuisance wildlife complaints in Illinois?



Eastern mole

(Photo courtesy Christopher Percha, UNL Libraries Digital Collections.)

In the latest annual report prepared by Bob Bluett, DNR Wildlife Diversity Program manager, Nuisance Animal Removal Permits issued to landowners or tenants in 2006 decreased by 17 percent over the previous year. Raccoon, woodchuck and beaver were the source of 60 percent of the problem encounters. Over the same time frame, the number of complaints reportedly serviced by Nuisance Wildlife Control Permittees increased by 12 percent, 80 percent of which took place in northeastern Illinois. Sixty-one percent of the animals handled were raccoons, squirrels or bats.

"The data collected is very conservative as many urban residents are not aware of permit requirement for removal of animals,"

(Photo courtesy Steven Wayne Rotsch, Painet, Inc.)

Habitat modification, placement of exclusions and animal removal are damage-control options landowners may pursue when beavers become a problem.

Bluett explained. "And in rural Illinois, many of the nuisance animals are removed by sport trappers and hunters during legal seasons."

"Illinois' wildlife is a valued resource, and on those rare occasions when they become troublesome, one of the biggest problems homeowners have is tracking down factual information in a timely fashion," explained Dan Ludwig, DNR Division of Wildlife regional wildlife biologist for northeastern Illinois. "A new Web site, Living with Wildlife in Illinois, provides the necessary information for handling all types of problems—and is available 24/7/365."

Puzzled by the burrow under your deck? Seeing tracks in the snow under your bird feeder every morning? Dog dish carried into the yard every night?

The first step of solving a nuisance wildlife issue is determining what is leaving evidence of their visit (tracks, scat, burrow holes, damage to buildings, damage to plants). After solving that mystery, bone up on the life history of the potential culprit though detailed pages including everything from habitat, distribution and abundance to damage prevention, control measures and public heath concerns. Then visit the sections of the site that provide information on how to prevent problems with urban wildlife and how to solve a problem with wildlife in your home.

(Photo by Adele Hodde.)

(Photo courtesy Christopher Percha, UNL Libraries Digital Collections.)

Regularly inspect your home's exterior —siding, roofing, chimneys, vents, soffits, window wells—to identify areas where animals may be gaining access.

"We fully anticipate that one of the most popular features of this Web site will be the contact information for district wildlife biologists, Conservation Police Officers, nuisance wildlife control operators, waterfowl control permittees and wildlife rehabilitators," Ludwig said.

"Prevention-based strategies of removing resources, such as improperly stored trash and pet food, or sealing off chimneys and attic vents, and the

Removing an attractive food resource —rodents, vegetation, lawn grubs, pet food, garbage—can be instrumental in managing a nuisance wildlife problem.

(Photo courtesy Stephen Vantassel, UNL Libraries Digital Collections.)

(Photo courtesy Erwin C. Nielsen, Painet Inc.)

(Photo courtesy Ryan Minor.)

(Photo courtesy Steve Heine.)

(Photo courtesy Brian Wells.)

Birdwatching and feeding are popular activities, but conflicts do occur, especially for expanding populations, such as the wild turkey.

use of exclusion techniques (repellents and frightening devices) should be the first step any homeowner considers," continued Ludwig. "Only when property damage has occurred, or a health issue is imminent, is removal considered an option."

And the final prevention-based strategy is the power of knowledge.

"By understanding wildlife food, water and shelter requirements, and how simple modifications can eliminate a problem area, landowners can create a setting where they can sit back and enjoy watching wildlife on their property," Ludwig concluded.

The Living with Wildlife in Illinois Web site makes doing that as easy as a click of the mouse.

Living with Wildlife in Illinois

Content on the Web site at http://livingwithwildlife.extension.uiuc.edu is divided into the following sections.

- Identify the Animal Causing a Problem
- Seasonal Behaviors of Wildlife
- Prevent Problems with Wildlife
- Solve a Problem with Wildlife
- Directory of Illinois Wildlife
- Do I Need a Permit?
- Public Health and Safety
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Sick, Injured or Orphaned Wildlife
- Report Unusual Wildlife Sightings to DNR
- Ask a DNR Wildlife Biologist

Seasonal Behaviors of Wildlife

Summer

Deer browse a variety of ornamentals, especially hostas and the buds and blooms of roses, lilies and daylilies. (April-September)

Canada geese and their broods deposit droppings on lawns, sidewalks and golf courses. Adult geese defend broods and are not easily frightened. (May-August)

Young **skunks, foxes and raccoons** move into new areas after leaving their natal dens. (May-September)

Squirrels, raccoons, deer and woodchucks invade vegetable gardens and damage sweet corn and other vegetables. (June-July)

In agricultural areas, **deer** damage corn in the silk and milk stages, especially on field edges adjacent to woodlands. (July-August)

Beavers begin cutting mature corn and collect woody material for their winter food supply. (August-October)

—From Web site: Living with Wildlife in Illinois

An indispensable tool for anyone dealing with unwelcome wildlife, the new Web site Living with Wildlife in Illinois, can be viewed at http://livingwithwildlife.extension.uiuc.edu. Developed by the Department of Natural Resources and University of Illinois Extension, the project was funded through a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Wildlife Restoration Grant. Additional input was provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (APHIS, Wildlife Services) and Illinois Departments of Public Health and Agriculture.