

Wildlife in the City of Toronto

Raccoon Facts – For More Information go to City Of Toronto:

- <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=f1fc83cf89870410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=a5737729050f0410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

- Raccoons have adapted well to city life. While raccoon families can be fun to watch, they can also come into conflict with property owners and residents.
- Raccoons are found in urban, rural and wilderness areas in almost all parts of Ontario.
- As omnivores, raccoons feed on grubs, insects, small rodents and other small animals, eggs, fleshy fruits (like grapes), nuts and vegetables (like corn). They will also eat from garbage and composts.
- In Ontario, raccoons breed from January to April; gestation is eight weeks, pups are born from March to June and the litter size averages three to five, which are mobile at seven to eight weeks old and are weaned by late summer. The cubs may stay with the mother over the winter.
- Raccoons are mainly active at night throughout the year. However, they may be dormant during periods of extended cold or in very deep snow conditions.
- Den sites include hollow trees, groundhog dens, chimneys, and garages, under and inside sheds, attics, and porches and under decks.
- Raccoons have amazing dexterity and use their front paws to pry things open, turn knobs and handle objects.
- Except during breeding season or when with young, raccoons are territorial and usually solitary.
- The animal's vocalizations include purrs, whimper, and snarl, growls, hisses, screams and whinnies.
- When adult animals die or are relocated, they're often leaving helpless babies behind. Most baby wild animals don't have the skills or street smarts yet to make it on their own. If you find abandoned wildlife babies, or animals that require immediate medical attention found anywhere on your property or in your

house, you could call and/or drop them off at your local Toronto Animal Control Center or The Toronto Wildlife Centre. In the case of dead animals found on your property, you can call the City of Toronto to have them removed.

- Please see the following links for more information:
<https://www.torontowildlifecentre.com/what-we-do/>
- <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=ea337729050f0410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>
- For information regarding Trapping and Relocating Wild Animals in Toronto go to The Toronto Wildlife Centre -
<https://www.torontowildlifecentre.com/wildlife-emergency-rescue-hotline/conflicts-with-wildlife/trapping-and-relocating-wild-animals/>
- Toronto Wildlife Centre recommends [AAA Gates Wildlife Control](http://www.aaagates.com) (416-750-9453) for wildlife removal.
- New raccoon proof green bins are expected to hit the curbs of Toronto's streets late 2015 or early 2016. They will replace the current bins that were rolled out between 2002 and 2006. Officials have previously said it will take approximately 18 months for the new bins to be delivered city-wide.
- **No level of government in Toronto or Ontario is responsible to raccoon proof your home, yard or gardens, or remove nesting wildlife from inside or outside of your home. The onus is on the homeowner. In fact, a resident may face fines and/or criminal charges if you do not comply with specific guidelines and laws set out by the government for wildlife proofing and removal of wildlife from your property and house. Current Ministry of Natural Resources guidelines state that using body gripping traps or placing poison could result in criminal charges and/or provincial charges with fines up \$5,000. The firing of guns in Toronto is illegal. Placing poison out to kill animals could result in criminal charges.**

Steps to Wildlife Proofing your Home and Gardens

Problems and Best Solutions

Lawn and garden

Raccoons are attracted to lawns and gardens, especially after rainfalls when grubs and larvae are near the surface. They dig small round holes and, in some cases, actually roll up large chunks of sod in order to eat the grubs.

Grubs feed on the grass root system, destroying the grass. For information about natural lawn and garden care see [Getting started on a pesticide free lawn](#)

Deterrent methods

- Sprinkling pure soap flakes on the lawn and watering thoroughly
- Mixing bone meal in garden soil
- Sprinkling diluted Tabasco sauce over fruits and vegetables (wash before eating)
- Lighting up the area where raccoons are a problem. Use one 100-watt bulb for every 15 square metres of garden (50 ft. by 50 ft.).

Garbage and composters

Garbage, compost and pet food can provide a real feast for raccoons, and once a free meal is found, they will return again and again. Since raccoons are very good at using their front paws, it is important to close down this potential wildlife café by:

- Storing garbage inside a garage, basement or bin until the morning of pick up
- Sprinkling strong smelling repellents such as oil of mustard, ammonia in or around the green bins and garbage
- Installing lights around green bin and garbage storage areas
- Cleaning up after barbecuing – raccoons are attracted to grease drippings
- Using enclosed-type composters only
- Feeding pets indoors and not purposely feeding wildlife.

Homes, attics, chimneys and their raccoon

residences

Uncapped chimneys are an open invitation for raccoons, and so are loose shingles and openings in attics, roofs and eaves, garages and sheds. Raccoons can rip shingles off and chew holes in buildings. A determined raccoon may also use the area under decks and other structures. For ways to evict raccoons, try the suggestions for [evicting skunks](#).

Although keeping these animals from getting into your home should be your first goal, the following approaches will help you evict them if they do get in, and will discourage them from re-entering.

Step 1: If you think you know where the animals get in, check to see if this entrance is in use by:

- Sprinkling flour in front of it and looking for footprints
- Stuffing a rag or bunched up ball of paper in the opening and checking later to see if it was removed.

Step 2: Encourage raccoons to leave on their own by making the home unlivable.

- Hang ammonia-soaked rags
- Play a loud radio tuned to an all-talk station
- Keep the area brightly lit.

Do not attempt to smoke animals out of the chimney - they could be suffocated or burned.

Step 3: Before any opening is closed off or any chimney is capped:

- Check to see that all raccoons have moved out, especially between March and July when there may be babies
- Make sure no animal is trapped inside a sealed area. It will starve to death, and you will be left with a smelly, decomposing carcass.

Step 4: When you are sure that all raccoons have left:

- Secure the opening to prevent re-entry
- Block all holes with galvanized sheet metal

- Repair siding and holes in buildings
- Use heavy, rustproof screening to cover open air vents
- Cap chimneys securely
- Trim overhanging tree branches
- Remove unused TV towers
- Leave behind ammonia or bleach* to discourage the raccoons in their search for another opening back into their old den.

* Ammonia has a strong odour. When using anything that has an unpleasant odour or fumes to deter wildlife, it is important that you first check to make sure the babies can move around on their own. Any animal exposed to fumes may become ill or die if they cannot escape.

How should I clean up raccoon feces?

Material contaminated with raccoon feces should be removed carefully and burned, buried or sent to a landfill. Care should be taken to avoid contaminating hands and clothes. The use of gloves and facemask will help prevent cross contamination. Treat decks, patios, and other surfaces with boiling water.

Always wash hands well with soap and running water, to help further reduce possible infection.

If all else fails...

Live trapping

When live trapping appears to be the only way to remove a problem raccoon, remember:

- Commercial wildlife removal companies do removal of nuisance wildlife. They should be consulted when the animal must be removed from between walls or from crawl spaces or when the homeowner is unable to solve the problem without expert assistance.
- Remember, reducing or eliminating whatever attracts raccoons to your property is the only long term or permanent solution to your conflict with the animal.

Trapping, hunting and poisoning

Although trapping is a quick answer, it does not solve the problem. If

one animal has found a way to get in, so will others. Trapping may also leave starving young behind to die, causing a bigger problem. Current Ministry of Natural Resources guidelines state that using body gripping traps or placing poison could result in criminal charges and/or provincial charges with fines up to \$5,000.

- The firing of guns in Toronto is illegal.
- Placing poison out to kill animals could result in criminal charges.

Rabies

Although all mammals can carry the rabies virus, raccoons are NOT a major carrier of this disease in Ontario. However, here are some tips to avoid human exposure to rabies:

- Vaccinate all dogs and cats, since there is always a chance of a pet coming in accidental contact with a rabid animal. Law requires rabies vaccinations for dogs and cats.
- Stay away from all wild animals, especially if they appear tame, injured or sick.
- Raccoons that show abnormal or sick behaviour should be reported to 311.
- If any animal bites you, wash the wound with soap and water, contact a doctor, and report the bite to Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600. If possible, have someone keep the animal in sight so that it can be captured or confined.

For more information about rabies visit the [Rabies Research and Development Unit](#).

Also see how to [wildlife-proof](#) your home.

Wildlife-Proof Your Home

The invasion of wild animals into your home is frustrating. Using loud noises to scare animals away may not always be enough. We will always have wildlife within our city environment, and we will have problems with these animals until we take preventative measures to reduce their populations by making sure they can't live in our homes. You may have to modify your home or make repairs that can be costly. However, once the repairs are done and you begin a regular inspection of your home, we believe your wildlife problems will be over.

If wild animals cannot be humanely encouraged to leave your home using the deterrents suggested here, we recommend that you get help from a professional and reputable wildlife removal company.

- [Coyotes](#)
- [Foxes](#)
- [Raccoons](#)
- [Skunks](#)
- [Squirrels](#)

You may have to dig a trench around a shed or patio and install fencing, called a [prevention skirt](#), below ground to keep foxes and other animals from digging dens.

Using deterrents

Deterrents are ways to keep animals from using your home for their den or nest. The [check list](#) explains which areas of your home can attract wildlife as den sites or food sources. These areas should be inspected in the early spring and fall. Damaged or weak spots should be repaired.

After an animal leaves you must make the necessary repairs immediately or the same animal or another one will move in.

Areas that cannot be repaired or screened should be checked regularly. These areas may include light fixtures or decorative outdoor fixtures, tool sheds, etc. Some areas, such as balconies, should be checked daily.

Remember these tips when you use the deterrent methods:

- Follow the instructions
- You must be as determined as they are. If you're using noises to scare animals away, make them loud and non-stop over a 24 to 48 hour period.
- Most of these animals are nocturnal and will not move out until late evening hours.
- Before making repairs, make sure all animals have left the area.

Use common sense when selecting a deterrent method.

- Try the least expensive methods first.
- Pay attention to detail when reading instructions on a deterrent substance.
- An odour deterrent may not work in an outdoor area or in an area

- that is so large the animal can move away from it.
- Using an odour deterrent in your home may also affect you!
 - Putting a deterrent substance on the surface of a lawn may not work if the animal can go around it, move away from it or turn back and avoid the substance.
 - Try several methods at the same time.
 - Use the exact product recommended, apply it exactly as suggested.

Wild Proof Your Home - Checklist

Chimney	Have it capped. Check the cap annually.	Check flashing around chimney
Roof area	Inspect shingles to make sure they are in good repair and secure.	Inspect all roof vents to make sure they are in good repair and are secure. (Screen vents where necessary)
Eavestrough	Clean out regularly to prevent a build-up of debris. Birds may nest there.	
Soffit	Inspect from ladder all around the house. (Repair or replace any loose or rotten soffit)	
House exterior	Inspect all siding and general exterior for weak, damaged or rotten areas. Make the necessary repairs.	
Windows	Check for any holes or openings in windows and seal them.	Window boxes should be filled with dirt or screened over.
Window wells	Clean out and secure screen over top.	
Lighting fixtures	Keep in good repair and seal, as birds will nest in and on them.	
Ornamental	Clean and check	

fixtures and mailboxes	regularly.	
Garage	Keep closed up and sealed as described for house exterior. Never leave open overnight or for extended periods.	
Decks and stairways	Enclose any areas that are open. Make repairs to enclosures when necessary.	Fill any holes under stairs with clay or concrete.
Shed	Follow the same steps for house and garage.	Enclose area beneath structure.
Pool	Unless raised or fenced around the exact perimeter, any animal may fall in.	Muskrats and ducks will use pools as ponds.
Yard	Clean up all debris in yard, including leaves, garbage, etc.	Avoid using woodpiles, if possible. Many animals, such as skunks, rats, opossums, snakes, etc., choose these as ideal nesting sites or hideouts. Try to keep woodpiles in an enclosed like as a garage or shed.
	Cut down or remove any over-hanging branches or old TV antennas around the home.	
Tree wells	Enclose and keep free of debris so animals do not fall in and become trapped.	
Lawn	Begin a good treatment program to eliminate grub larvae.	
Garbage	Keep in sealed containers at all times. Containers should be kept in an enclosed area. Place at	

Barbecue	<p>curb on day of pick-up. Keep clean and free of grease.</p>	
Gardens, fruit trees, etc.	<p>These are going to be obvious attractions as a food source for any wildlife. It makes sense that the more vines, trellises and clutter you have in the yard, the higher your risk of wildlife invasion.</p>	
Pets	<p>The presence of a pet may deter wildlife, however, never use a pet to chase or scare wildlife. They could cause serious injury to a pet and/or the other animal. A pet left outdoors unattended or allowed to roam free is always at risk of coming in contact with a wild animal, sick or healthy.</p>	<p>A pet that is fed outdoors may attract unwanted guests.</p>
Feeding wildlife	<p>Have your pet vaccinated yearly for rabies, etc. Feeding birds is a nice way to attract them; however, it may also attract other wild animals. Never encourage wild animals with food.</p>	
"Bite proof" children	<p>Just as you "street proof" children, you should also teach wildlife safety to your children. Tell them that they should never approach or touch a wild animal. They should tell an</p>	

	adult they know if they seen a wild animal.	
Apartment	The most common problem in an apartment is the balcony. It is a place for animals to nest or sleep. It is also a favorite roosting and nesting spot for pigeons.	
Preventative tips	Clear balcony of all junk, debris and garbage. Repair broken windows and screens. Close accesses to storage areas. Use wire mesh, plastic netting, pull-down blinds or a commercial barrier.	