



## "Keep Wildlife Wild," Says Wildlife Commission

**Provide a habitat not a handout**

Spring marks the time of year when the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission receives the most calls from well-intentioned people who make the mistake of interacting with wildlife by feeding, making "pets" or otherwise, "helping" wildlife. In almost all instances, the advice agency biologists give is "Help keep wildlife wild." Feeding wildlife, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is the number one reason interactions between the public and wildlife can turn negative.

"Feeding wildlife almost always leads to problems for both the animal and the person feeding it," said Allen Boynton, the Commission's wildlife diversity program coordinator. "Wild animals that are provided with a steady supply of food from humans will lose their natural fear of humans, which can make them a problem. For instance, if you live in an area where bears are common and you don't take down your bird feeders or secure your trash cans, a bear will associate your yard with 'food' and can become a problem."

Likewise, the Commission receives many calls this time of year from people concerned about foxes and raccoons they see in their backyards, usually because they're inadvertently feeding the animals. Commission biologist suggest several ways people can keep unwanted wildlife out of their yards. They should:

- Secure garbage in containers with tight-fitting lids;
- Keep trash inside as late as possible on pick-up days;
- Keep bird-feed areas clean;
- Use bird feeders that keep seed off the ground; and,
- Make sure all pet food is consumed and empty bowls are promptly removed

Feeding wildlife also can increase the chance of disease transmission among people, pets and wildlife. When human-supplied food is readily available, animals will gather in abnormally large numbers, which can allow diseases - such as salmonellosis, distemper or rabies - to spread.

Rabies is of concern because it is a fatal disease and occurring in several native mammals, most notably raccoons, bats and foxes. Disease transmission also is a good reason why people shouldn't attempt to make a wild animal a pet. Not only is it dangerous for the animal and the person, but it is also illegal without a wildlife rehabilitation license issued by the Commission.

Boynton also cautions people to refrain from capturing and handling a wild animal, particularly young wildlife, as doing so can stress it, sometimes fatally. "When a person keeps a wild animal, such as a fawn, a raccoon, or rabbit as a pet, the animal grows up dependent upon that person and is not able to live on its own in the wild," Boynton said. "Many times, that animal cannot be released back into the wild because it may carry diseases or does not have the ability to survive on its own."

Finally, for those people who want to "help" wildlife, such as a fawn that looks abandoned or a fledging bird hopping awkwardly on the ground, Boynton tells them to "just leave it alone and keep your distance. Chances are the mother is nearby and will return when she feels it is safe to do so."

The Commission maintains on its website a list of licensed wildlife rehabilitators who can assist with injured or truly orphaned wildlife. Visit [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

Instead of feeding wildlife or bringing them into their home, people should give animals natural sources of food and shelter - providing habitat not a hand-out. The Commission recommends a few tips for creating a wildlife-friendly backyard, regardless of size:

- Planting native trees, grasses, shrubs, flowers • Creating a rock garden
- Creating a small pond or fountain • Building bird and bat houses (bat house plans <<http://www.batcon.org/resources/getting-involved/bat-houses>>)
- Creating brush piles from pruned trees, shrubs and vines

Anyone who has questions about human-wildlife interactions can call the Commission's N.C. Wildlife Helpline toll-free at 866-318-2401. The call center is open Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information about coexisting with wildlife, visit the Commission's Tips on Co-Existing with Wildlife page [www.ncwildlife.org/Have-A-Problem/Tips-on-Coexisting-with-Wildlife](http://www.ncwildlife.org/Have-A-Problem/Tips-on-Coexisting-with-Wildlife).

## Respiratory Etiquette - Stop Germs at the Source

Here are a few tips for those suffering from a cold, to not impose on others around them.

- 1) Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your upper sleeve when you cough or sneeze.
- 2) Do not cover your mouth or nose with your hands when you sneeze.
- 3) Always place your used tissue in the waste basket.
- 4) You may be asked to put on a surgical mask to protect others.
- 5) Coughing persons should sit at least three feet away from others.
- 6) Regularly wash your hands with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner.

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