

## Noises in the Chimney

Keeping the damper closed is of utmost importance. This separates "you" from "them". Never light a fire "to smoke them out". Infants who are unable to climb out and trapped adults will die from smoke inhalation inside the chimney, which causes other problems (such as decay and odor).

Chimney swifts (small, black birds) have adapted quite readily to nesting in uncapped chimneys. They do no damage to the chimney but use it as a nesting and roosting site.

The chattering noise is the nestlings begging for food. The adults arrive in the spring, build their nest using their saliva to glue the twigs to the inside wall of the chimney; lay the eggs; incubate them (about 20 days); feed the young (for about 30 days); then everyone migrates south in the fall. Before they leave on migration, they continue to use the chimney as a roost. They feed exclusively on insects, which they capture during the day. The easiest solution is to wait until they leave the chimney on their own to migrate (September), then have your chimney professionally cleaned and capped.

Raccoons occasionally nest in chimneys. To get mom to move her babies elsewhere, place a radio in the fireplace, and in the evening turn it on loud. Once she has vacated the area, cap the chimney.

Occasionally squirrels and birds fall down chimneys and are unable to climb back out. Dropping a thick rope down the chimney allows a trapped mammal to climb out. Birds on the

other hand usually have to come out through the fireplace. **Call the MCCD Wildlife Resource Center at 815-728-8307 for more specific advice.**

## Damage to Siding

Woodpeckers communicate to each other by drumming, usually on trees but occasionally on siding, metal gutters, chimneys or other undesirable locations. Woodpeckers also drill holes in siding while trying to excavate a cavity. Eyespot balloons or strips of mylar flashing (sold in many lawn and garden centers) work as a deterrent to frighten the woodpeckers away. Try attaching these to the gutter near the damaged areas.



Occasionally squirrels chew on siding. Commercial repellents are available at most lawn and garden centers to deter chewing or you can try making your own! (see **Trouble in the Garden** for recipes)

## Repair

In all cases, making repairs to holes or other entry points is essential. If you don't seal up the means of entry after evicting the current resident, eventually some other creature will find it and you'll have to start the process all over again!



## Prevention, Not Relocation

Please understand that the relocation of a "nuisance" animal to a "more suitable" habitat is not truly humane. Taking a raccoon from the familiar streets of a subdivision and putting him in the woods is not doing him any favors. Besides invading the already established territory of his rural cousin, this city raccoon doesn't know where anything is in these unfamiliar surroundings. He has no home nor knowledge of food and water supplies in the area. If he stays, his chances of survival are minimal. If he decides to move on (at the insistence of the current inhabitant!), he may try to return home and cross numerous roads in the process. It is also important to remember that if one animal is removed, chances are excellent that another will move in to claim the now-vacant territory. In the long run, exclusion and deterrents are better solutions for dealing with nuisance wildlife. For more information, please contact the **MCCD Wildlife Resource Center** at 815-728-8307.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Wildlife trapping requires a special permit from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Contact your local IDNR office for more information.

**IDNR Region 2 Office, Bartlett: 847-608-3100**

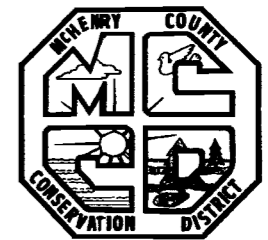
For more information, please contact

**McHenry County Conservation District**  
18410 U.S. Highway 14  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
815.338.MCCD (6223)  
[www.MCCDistrict.org](http://www.MCCDistrict.org)

## Wild by Nature: Unwanted Visitors



*A publication of the*  
**McHenry County**  
**Conservation District**  
815.338.MCCD



## Disappearing Habitat

Many species of plants and animals are unable to adapt to the loss of their familiar, sometimes unique habitats, which can ultimately lead to their extinction. On the other hand, numerous species have adapted quite readily to living around people and buildings. These are the ones who unfortunately can come into conflict with their human neighbors. However, there are ways to live harmoniously with each other.

## Don't Invite Them In

To prevent the possibility of wildlife utilizing your home as theirs, check your house thoroughly for any vents or holes larger than the size of a quarter that could allow access and cover them with 1/4" heavy gauge wire screening. Fan vents, dryer vents and chimneys—all possible entry points—need to be secured. Check under the shingles by the gutters for possible gaps and cover them with wire screening. Repair or replace any loose or rotted boards. Keep window wells covered and make sure your porch or deck has a fence or barrier to prevent animals from getting underneath it.

## The Dinner Table

Unintentional or not, anything edible left unattended attracts unwanted guests. It is much easier to eat at a fully stocked buffet than it is to search for a morsel.



Feeders in the backyard put out to attract the brilliant cardinal during the day also attracts the intelligent raccoon and adaptable rat at night. Just because they're called "bird feeders" doesn't mean birds are the only ones who eat there! Trash needs

to be secured in a can with a tight-fitting lid, preferably stored in a garage or shed to prevent access. Pet food should be available only when the pet is present. Fallen fruit from trees should also be removed.

## Noises in the Attic



Raccoons and tree squirrels (gray, fox, flying) are the most common inhabitants of the attic. Noises heard during the day probably mean a gray or fox squirrel has taken up residence. But if the commotion

is at night, chances are it's a raccoon. If the noises aren't very loud, it could be flying squirrels. Attics supply a warm, quiet place out of the weather. In order to evict these unwanted guests, make their newfound home inhospitable. Turn on the lights and leave them on. It's even better if you can get the lights to flash (strobe). Play a radio loudly. If you know the area where they're living, soak some rags in ammonia and toss them in the vicinity. Tie a string around the rag so you can retrieve it and soak it again the following day. If young are present (May-August), avoid using the ammonia since babies could be harmed or killed by the fumes. Mothballs are ineffective in a large area and are toxic to people as well.

## Birds

Occasionally birds find a hole in the roof or soffit and make their way into the attic. They may even use a dryer vent to nest. Once the babies hatch, the adults fly in and out to gather food and to feed them. Incubation lasts approximately two weeks, then it takes another 2-3 weeks for the young to leave the nest. If you discover the nest before eggs are laid, just remove the nest and seal up their

entrance. If eggs or young are present, wait until the young leave the nest, then proceed with covering the entrance hole. See also **Noises in the Chimney.**

## Burrows or Under a Deck

Ammonia-soaked rags or smelly socks tossed under the deck or into the burrow work as deterrents. Once again, if you tie a string around the rag, you can easily retrieve it to resoak it.

## Nest Boxes

Give the animals somewhere else to go. Raccoons and squirrels readily use nest boxes (a better alternative than your attic). **Call the MCCD Wildlife Resource Center at 815-728-8307 for more information.**

## Window Wells

Placing a thick branch diagonally into the window well, usually allows the animal to climb out on its own. Most nocturnal creatures wait until dark before making their way up the branch. Occasionally baby animals fall in and can't climb back out. Place a small wastebasket on its side and allow the youngster to crawl into the container. **Call the MCCD Wildlife Resource Center at 815-728-8307 for more information.**

## Trouble in the Garden

Skunks, squirrels and raccoons are all prone to digging in lawns and gardens, usually looking for various grubs to eat. Chemically treating your lawn for these invertebrates removes this food source. Sprinkling cayenne pepper around the trouble spots may also discourage digging. If deer are



dining on your garden, many local garden centers and garden catalog companies carry a wide range of commercial deer repellent products. Here are a few home remedies you can try. The strong smells act as a deterrent:

- Hang Irish Spring® soap or nylon stockings stuffed with human hair from trees and bushes.
- Spread urine from carnivores (like cats) around the perimeter of the garden. This product can often be obtained from your local garden center.
- Grind 1/4 - 1/2 lb. of fresh beef liver in a food processor with 1 quart of water. Sprinkle or spray mixture on plants.
- Mix 4 raw eggs in a gallon of water and spray mixture on plants.

## HOT PEPPER SPRAY

1/2 c. hot peppers (or 1/4 c. dried red pepper)  
2 quarts water  
1 tablespoon liquid soap  
Mix peppers and 2 cups water in a blender. Let stand overnight, then strain and add rest of water and soap. Spray mixture on plants.

## GARLIC SPRAY

3 whole garlic bulbs  
3 tablespoons mineral oil or olive oil  
3 cups warm water  
Separate garlic cloves and chop. Put in jar with oil and let stand 24 hours. Add water and store in fridge. When ready to use, strain and dilute 1/2 cup concentrate to 1 quart water. Spray mixture on plants.