



## **RACCOONS** living with wildlife

*In an effort to coexist with wildlife, consider the enormous hardships these intelligent and fascinating wild species encounter because so much of their habitat has been destroyed. Each year they are forced into closer contact with humans and must compete with us for food, shelter and space. With a little understanding, patience and a few precautions and common sense steps, we can all enjoy the wonderfully interesting wild animals who share our backyards and cities.*

Raccoons are known for their 'bandit-masked' face and ringed tail. They are very adaptable and only require food, water and shelter to be satisfied. While they are nocturnal animals, they are sometimes active in the daytime.

**Habitat.** In rural areas raccoons typically use hollow trees, stumps, logs, caves, vacant groundhog or fox burrows and buildings such as barns for dens. In cities raccoons may use chimneys, garages, sewers, attics, crawl spaces, storm sewers, outbuildings, and under buildings as their den site.

**Diet.** Raccoons are omnivores, meaning they eat almost any type of food item, including larvae and grubs that they dig up from lawns.

**Reproduction.** Raccoons mate during the late winter to early spring. Birth usually occurs in May but can range from March to September. The young remain in the den for about eight weeks until they are able to venture outside with their mother.

### **Common questions:**

#### **How can I get rid of a raccoon in my attic/crawl space/under my deck?**

If there are young involved, tolerance and patience is our first recommendation. Young are not able to venture outside the den until about eight weeks of age. It is very preferable for the young to be mobile before attempting to exclude the raccoons. To exclude the raccoons place a battery-powered radio in the attic near the den, tuned on an all-talk station at a fairly loud volume. Also, keep a battery-powered light on at all times shining towards the den as this will disturb the mother while she is trying to rest. Making several trips to the attic during the day when the mom

is trying to rest can disturb her and make her feel insecure and encourage her to move on to a new den. Avoid direct contact with the raccoons because this places yourself and wildlife at risk.

During the use of any deterrent method you need patience, as it will take several days for the raccoons to leave. The raccoon must find a new, suitable den site, and if there are young involved, it may take the mother a few nights to relocate them. To determine if the raccoon(s) are gone place a piece of plastic over the entrance/exit hole. If there are raccoons still living in the space they will have no problem tearing it down. Leave the plastic up for two to three nights, and if it is not torn down after that time, you can take steps to permanently seal the entrance/exit hole to ensure no other wildlife will move in.

If there is no young involved the tactics described above can be put into action immediately. A chemical/odour deterrent, such as coyote urine, may also be used in this case. Once the homeowner believes the raccoons have left, a piece of galvanized steel screening can be placed over the entrance hole. Food or flour can be placed in the attic so that only animals in the attic can access it. If there are no footprints in the flour and the food is untouched after three days you can permanently seal the entrance hole. If there are footprints, or the food is gone, IMMEDIATELY open the entrance/exit hole.

### **I found orphaned raccoons. What should I do?**

Young raccoons are often left alone while the mother searches for food. Even though the young are alone does not necessarily mean that they are orphaned. If the young are in the den and appear healthy then leave them, the mother will most likely return later. Keep a watch on the den for the mother returning. If you find young raccoons with no mother or den site present, place the young raccoons in a box and keep it in a dark, quiet place, such as the garage, until the evening. Around this time place the box outside with the flaps folded over. Leave the box overnight. Do NOT feed the young raccoons. It is important that the young are hungry so that the mother hears their cries. Also, "human" food can make young raccoons sick. Check the box in the morning. If the young are still in the box take them to your local Ontario SPCA, affiliated Humane Society or licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Wild animals should not be raised as pets or kept in your home. It is illegal to keep wild animals in your home or to provide care for over 24 hours as they require professional attention.

Strong indicators that young raccoons may be orphaned or injured include if they are brought in by a family pet, are found shivering, have an obvious broken limb or injury, or there are signs of a dead adult raccoon near the nest.

### **I've seen a raccoon(s) during the day. Is something wrong with it (them)?**

Raccoons are nocturnal but they are occasionally active during the day, therefore, if you see a raccoon during the day there is no need to panic. However, if the raccoon looks sick, e.g. stumbling, walking in circles, etc., call your local Ontario SPCA Branch, affiliated Humane Society or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Do not attempt to handle the animal.