

## Backyard Birds

Neighborhoods are perfectly good homes for all kinds of birds. We find everything from the smallest hummingbird to large birds of prey, noisy starlings to cawing crows. All of these birds can find a comfortable niche in our neighborhoods and backyards.



Along with the pleasures of these wild and beautiful creatures come the hazards of mingling wildlife into city settings. What do we do with the orphaned baby birds that our children find or the frightened robin the cat brings in? What about birds hit by a car or caught in fishing line? Birds sometimes fly into the house or into windows. They dive-bomb passersby or nest right above the front door. All are perplexing problems. How do we deal with these situations in a way that doesn't harm these otherwise welcomed visitors to our yards and neighborhoods?

It is important to remember that birds and almost all wild animals are afraid of people. No matter how stressful the situation is to us at the moment, it is even more frightening to the bird. This means that handling and close contact with people should be avoided whenever possible and kept to a minimum when it does become necessary.

### How to Prevent Problems

\*1\* Put a bell on your outdoor cat, especially if you hang bird feeders in your yard. A breakaway collar, with a bell and ID tag attached, is safest for the cat. The bell will warn birds of the approaching predator.

\*2\* Sometimes birds appear to be attacking the windows. This is actually a seasonal problem. There are times when the light is just right for a bird to see its own reflection and think that a rival is in the territory. At this season or time of the day, cover the outside of the window with newspaper or somehow shade the window from the outside. Usually this inconvenience is short-lived and, as the seasons change, the window becomes less of a hazard for backyard birds.

\*3\* If birds habitually nest on the light fixture above the front door or some other inconvenient location, it is often easy to prevent nesting by putting an obstacle in the bird's way. A chicken wire barrier can make a favorite nest site seem quite inhospitable. If you like the birds, but not in that location, try putting a nest platform in a more acceptable location. Maybe the bird will oblige and everyone will be happy.

\*4\* If you find birds entering the attic or chimney, try to scare them out before the nests are completed. Put a barrier, like chicken wire, over all the openings before the birds return. It's okay to disrupt nest building. The birds will find another spot and start over. But if you don't discover the birds until after the eggs have been laid, you will have to put up with baby bird

noise for awhile. Most birds are protected by federal law and once the nest has eggs or young in it, it is against the law to disturb the nest. Luckily, most baby birds are only in the nest for three or four weeks. As soon as the babies are fledged (that is, out of the nest), seal off their entry way. Many species nest twice in a season and will set up housekeeping again in the same location within a few weeks.

\*5\* Dive-bombing birds or birds that seem to be attacking passersby are usually protecting their nest. If people or pets get within a certain range of a bird's nest, the parent birds may try to drive these intruders away. Give the birds as wide a berth as possible so that they don't feel threatened by your presence. In about three weeks, after the babies are fledged (that is, out of the nest), this territorial behavior will stop.

\*6\* For ducks that land in the backyard swimming pool, try leaving a beach ball and some brightly colored floating toys in the pool. This is usually enough to discourage the birds from landing.

\*7\* Vegetable gardens and fruit trees are another favorite spot for our wild neighbors. Birds will often get rid of unwanted insect pests, but they also love brand new foliage and newly ripened fruits and vegetables. Short of enclosing our trees and gardens completely, there is no perfect solution to this problem. Scarecrows, plastic owls, or plastic snakes sometimes work to scare the birds away. To increase their effectiveness, move these devices periodically so that the birds don't get used to them in one location. Large whirligigs shaped like flowers are available in garden shops. They work to distract the birds as long as the wind is blowing. Tin can lids or aluminum foil flags strung over a garden can create enough reflection and clatter to keep birds out as well.

What if a....

#### BIRD GETS INTO THE HOUSE

If this happens, remember that birds will most often fly to the highest location they can reach and will fly towards light in search of an escape route. You can help them find the way out by closing all the curtains and doors except for the opening you'd like the bird to use as an exit. Birds will quickly tire after flying around a room so let them rest where they land before shooing them toward the lighted opening. If the bird lands on the floor, you may be able to toss a pillow case over the bird. Gently scoop it up and release it outside.

#### BIRD FLIES INTO PLATE GLASS WINDOW

If the injury is not serious, the bird may recover from the shock of such an accident in a matter of minutes. Gently place the bird in a small cardboard box or paper bag and leave it alone in a quiet place for half an hour. After thirty minutes, stand near a tree or thick brush and open the box or bag so the bird can fly off safely. If the bird has not recovered after thirty minutes, call a rehab. facility (Crittter Creek: 559-338-2415).

#### INJURED BIRD

Do not offer it food or water. Do not attempt to remove fishing line or something else that might be caught or tangled around the bird. Gently place it in a small cardboard box or paper bag lined with tissue. Call a rehab. facility (Critter Creek: 559-338-2415).

#### BABY BIRD FALLEN FROM ITS NEST

You can put baby birds back into their nests. It's an old wives tale that the mother will reject her babies if they have human scent on them. Most birds do not have any sense of smell at all. So if you know where the nest is, put the babies back in and leave it alone. The parents won't return to care for the babies if people are around. If you can't find the nest, put the baby bird in a cardboard box, go to the place where you found the bird and listen for the parents. Place the box as high as you can in a tree or structure near the location. Usually the parents will hear their youngster and feed it.

#### BABY BIRD HOPPING AROUND ON THE GROUND

Baby birds often leave the nest as much as seventy-two hours before they can actually fly, so the baby bird you found may not be abandoned or orphaned. The adult birds hide these fledglings in bushes while looking for food. If the bird is not in any immediate danger from cats or dogs, place it under some thick brush and leave it alone.

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## Coyotes

The coyote is similar in shape to the shepherd dog. Coloration is grey, brown, or tan. The tail is the distinguishing factor. The coyote's tail is round, bushy, and carried straight out below its back.

A coyote's legs are slender, and its feet are smaller than those of a dog of the same size. The muzzle is long and slender, and its ears are large and erect.

Coyotes are omnivorous and eat whatever is handy, including meat, garbage, insects, rodents, rabbits, birds, and carrion. In late summer and early fall, fruits and berries can make up a large portion of their diet. Coyotes are important in controlling rodents; 80% of their diet consists of rabbits, squirrels, gophers, mice, and rats. Normally solitary hunters, they sometimes hunt in pairs and rarely in packs to down larger prey. Coyotes can run up to 45 mph for short distances and swim well. They are active both day and night, though chiefly nocturnal. They have a life span of 10 to 15 years in captivity and 8 to 10 years in the wild.

Coyotes are monogamous. They breed just once a year from January to March and their gestation period is 63 days. Litters usually average anywhere from five to ten pups. These pups are born underground in a den that the female hollows out. Their babies begin to learn how to hunt at about ten weeks of age and are less than a year old when they leave their parents.

Coyotes' exceptional sense of smell, vision, and hearing, coupled with their evasiveness, enable them to survive both in the wild and in suburban areas. They adapt quickly to environmental changes and exploit new food sources, ignoring fat-moving automobiles to clean up road-killed birds and small animals, for example. Coyotes are basically garbage bandits. Accused, often wrongly, of killing livestock, they are sometimes considered pests.

If you want to discourage coyotes from visiting, take the following steps:

1. Make sure your pets are inside whenever coyotes are seen or heard. Do not allow pets to run free. Always walk your dog on leash and accompany pets outside, especially at night. Provide secure shelters for poultry and rabbits.
2. DO NOT feed coyotes. Observe food sources that are attracting them and take steps to eliminate these. Never leave pet food outside or discard edible garbage where coyotes can get to it. Secure garbage containers and eliminate their odors. Use a small amount of ammonia or cayenne pepper in the garbage to discourage scavenging. Restricting use of bird seed may be advisable; coyotes are attracted to it and to the birds and rodents that use the feeder. If possible, eliminate outdoor sources of water.
3. Trim and clear near ground level any shrubbery that provides cover for coyotes or prey.
4. Use fencing to help deter coyotes. The fence must be at least six feet tall with the bottom extending at least six inches below ground level.
5. Actively discourage coyotes by making loud noises and throwing rocks to make them leave.
6. Ask your neighbors to cooperate in following these non-lethal steps to control coyote presence in your area.

Critter Creek wishes to thank those ranchers who recognize the potential of coyotes as a natural ground squirrel population control. They support our coyote rehab efforts by welcoming them on their land. We appreciate their efforts to reestablish a critical predator-prey balance intended by nature.

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## Deer

The black-tailed deer is a sub-species of the mule deer. The doe may have between one and three fawns. The young are born in late spring or early summer and stay with their mother through the next winter. Deer are widespread and common.

Though they prefer chaparral, they will adjust to just about any open space they can find. Canyons surrounded by houses are common places for a small herd of deer. The problems occur when they wander out into the road or when they begin choosing your roses over weeds. Most people do not object to deer visitors until it becomes attracted to their garden. A regular six-foot fence is a deterrent, but a healthy adult can spring over it in a single bound.

#### To Prevent Problems

\*\*\* The best way of controlling deer is fencing. Deer fences should be at least eight feet high and should slant out toward the approach area. If the entire yard cannot be fenced, place fencing around select plants or areas.

\*\*\* Plant shrubs and trees that are known to be deer-resistant. For a complete list of plants and trees that are deer-resistant, check a book store with a well -supplied gardening section.

\*\*\* Repellents are of two types: some repel directly through bad taste and others indirectly by sight, smell, or sound. Direct repellents include commercial products containing the bittering agent thiram. Remember a repellent does not protect new growth and may be washed off with dew or sprinklers. The following homemade concoction can be made and sprayed directly on plants and reapplied weekly. Mix well two eggs, one glass of skim milk, one glass of water, and a spreader-thickener (a wetting agent purchased from plant nurseries) then apply. Any direct repellent should be applied in the fall, when plants first go dormant, and repeated per instructions. Hang indirect repellents, including nylon stockings containing small amounts of human hair; mirrors; strips of tinfoil; or commercial smell repellents. Or hang rags soaked in ammonia on branches; replenish with ammonia regularly to maintain the odor. Deer are adaptable so it is important to vary the methods, or the animals will learn that the repellents are not harmful and will no longer be deterred by them.

#### Apparently "Orphaned" Fawn

Fawns are often left alone for long periods of time while the mother forages for food. Anyone who comes upon a fawn should leave it alone and go away so its mother can feel free to return. Only if the fawn is obviously emaciated or injured, or if a doe is found dead and the fawn orphaned, should you call a wildlife care agency, such as Critter Creek Wildlife Station (559-338-2415).

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#### Opossums

Opossums are marsupials. This means the female has a pouch where her young fasten themselves to a nipple and hold on for over two months. Mating season is from January to October, and it usually peaks from February to June.

Opossums have between two and three litters a year and bear an average of 8 young but can have as many as 13. Being nocturnal, the opossum looks for food during the night. They eat just about anything. They are found on farmlands and woodlands but have slowly migrated into more urban communities. A mature opossum measures 2 to 3 feet long. Their tails alone can be as short as 8 inches and as long as 12 inches. Their bodies are covered, predominantly, with grayish-white fur, but the head is usually white. Both ears and tail are fleshy, with a leather-like texture. An opossum is distinguishable: thick bodied, short-legged, a prominently pointed face, and a long rat-like tail. However, they are often mistaken for very large rats.

Opossums are omnivores and eat foods such as vegetables, fruits, nuts, meats, fish, eggs, carrion, grains, and small mammals. They have been deemed scavengers because they raid garbage cans. Opossums, however, are pretty indiscreet about garbage can raids and are often caught red-handed.

#### WANT TO AVOID THEM

Here are some valuable tips:

\*\*\* Pick up your animal's food dish at night if you feed him/her outdoors. Opossums are not above a free domestic animal's meal. Keep animal doors locked at night.

\*\*\* Fence in your backyard or garbage can area. If you catch an opossum in the midst of a raid, do not attempt to pick up or corner the animal; they have very bad tempers and 50 very sharp teeth. Instead use bright lights or loud noises to frighten the animal away. Opossums may roll over on their side and play dead if startled. If they do this, just leave them alone. They may lay there for an hour but eventually they will scurry away when it is safe.

\*\*\* Securely fasten garbage can lids.

\*\*\* Place ammonia-soaked rags, mothballs in socks, and/or cayenne pepper in strategic places surrounding the area most plagued by opossums.

\*\*\* Bang pans, rustle paper, open/close doors, keep outdoor lights on, or play a radio to deter the opossums from coming into your yard.

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Owls

Several species of owls are common in the Central Valley and surrounding foothills. These include: the great horned owl, the barn owl, the burrowing owl, and the screech owl (listed from largest to smallest). Owls often overlap hawk and eagle territories, but because owls are night hunters, there is little or no conflict between them.

Owls are able to catch their prey unaware because of their noiseless flight feathers. Owls have extraordinary sight; unlike other birds, their eyes are positioned in the front of the head, which permits binocular vision even at close range. An owl's vision is 100 times more sensitive at night than a human's, and even better during the day. Owls cannot move their eyes so must turn their heads to look in a different direction; owls have a 270-degree range of motion with their heads. They also have the largest eardrums of any bird, giving them sensitive hearing, and they can move feathers on their heads to channel sounds to help them locate prey.

Historically, owls have been greatly misunderstood and feared. Because of their nocturnal hunting, night cries, and dark habitats, superstition has equated them with sinister deeds and darkness. In reality, owls are beneficial to humans because they keep down rodent and insect populations.

Great horned owls are 18 to 23 inches long with a wingspan up to 5 feet. Females are slightly larger than males. The basic body color is overall gray spotted with brown-and-white markings; these owls have a white throat collar above a dark-streaked breast. The beak is black, eyes deep yellow, and ear tufts 1 to 2 inches long. Both males and females have distinctive "horns"(tufts of feathers) and four razor-sharp talons on each foot (only eagles have a stronger grip). Great horned owls give a characteristic owl cry of three to eight hoots. Great horned owls, like other raptors, are carnivorous.

They hunt early in the evening, eating almost any kind of meat, including rabbits, mice, skunks, birds of all kinds, snakes, fish, and insects. Hunting techniques vary: on wing, wading in the water, or perching and then pouncing. These owls have powerful talons and have been known to attack coyotes, porcupines, dogs, and cats. Their eardrums are larger than those of any other bird. Great horned owls are protected by state and federal laws; they have a life span of 15-30 years.

Barn owls are 15 to 20 inches high. They have white, heart-shaped faces and no ear tufts. Their bodies are pale yellow orange spotted with dark gray brown and white; the beak is pale yellow. The underside of their wings is pure white. With the white coloration coupled with a rasping cry and clicking sound, they do truly appear ghost-like flying overhead. Barn owls are more nocturnal than other owls and rely mostly on hearing to catch prey, which enables them to hunt in complete darkness. Their facial hairs are sound sensitive and aid them in detecting minute sounds. The leading edge of the wings has very soft feathers, permitting the owl to fly silently and surprise its prey. Barn owls are excellent rodent catchers, and a single hunting owl with nesting young may fly 10-15 miles a night, greatly helping farmers to control rodent populations. As in all owls, after food is digested in the stomach, a pellet formed of the

undigested fur and bones is cast up from the stomach through the mouth and spit out. Barn owls live 15-30 years.

Western screech owls are one of the smallest owls, measuring only 8-9 inches long. It is brownish and has prominent ear tufts, a dark bill, and yellow eyes. It has two common calls: a series of accelerating whistles, and a short trill followed by a longer one. Western screech owls feed on mice, voles, and songbirds found in the forests.

Burrowing owls are only 9 inches long, with a 21-inch wingspan. They are sandy brown spotted with white above and have a white chin stripe, barred under parts, yellow eyes, and unusually long legs. Burrowing owls feed at night on roaches, crickets, other insects, small lizards, frogs, snakes, and rodents. They live as single breeding pairs or loose colonies of two or more families and roost in nests underground. Usually the burrows extend 4 to 8 feet, with the nesting chamber at the end of the burrow, lined with grass, feathers, paper, and manure.

Owls need nesting sites and protection. Critter Creek has directions on how to build barn owl nesting boxes. If you are interested, contact us, but remember such nesting boxes must be placed in a location similar to their natural habitat where there is no or restricted use of pesticides.

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## Raccoons

Raccoons are found in all types of habitats. We usually associate them with riparian or wetland regions. But over the years, we have changed their habitat into our living spaces and they have had no problem adapting to our lifestyles and do not fear people like many other wild animals. At one time they found housing in piles of stone, fallen trees, or holes in the banks of creeks. Now those nesting places have been replaced with attics, crawl spaces under our homes, hot tubs, decks, tool sheds, and storm drains. Water sources, such as the numerous creeks and springs in our area have been replaced by water dishes for pets, swimming pools, and ponds. Thus, we have problems with them claiming back "our" space for their own. Consequently, raccoons topple garbage cans, nest in attics, roll back lawns for food, prey upon pond life, and are even intrepid enough to come into our homes. Remember, prevention is the key to avoiding problems with raccoons.

Being nocturnal animals, raccoons roam properties at night, looking for insects, fruits, vegetables, acorns, seeds, fish, and small mammals. They are seasonal eaters and prefer fish, crayfish, and small mammals in the spring. During the other seasons, they feed upon acorns, seeds, fruits, vegetables, insects, and other invertebrates. Raccoons breeding season is January to March. Gestation is typically 63 days and litters average from three to six young.

How can you discourage this behavior from occurring on your property?

It is important that you check your property regularly to insure that screens, barring entrance into your home or basement, are intact. Make sure there are no holes in your eaves for access into the attic. Close the areas around decks, hot tubs, and sheds. Raccoons are great rodent predators and often follow mice and rats into these kinds of areas.

\*\*\* Place ammonia stations around your yard wherever the raccoons frequent. To do this, take a shallow dish or bowl, place a rag in it and pour ammonia over the rag until completely saturated. Place enough ammonia in the dish so the rag will continue to wick it up throughout the night. Avoid lawn areas, as the ammonia will burn the lawn.

\*\*\* Pick up all of your outdoor pet's food dishes before it gets dark. Replace them with an ammonia station. Lock dog and cat doors to keep raccoons from entering your garage or home, and place an ammonia station in front of the locked door.

\*\*\* Raccoons will push garbage cans over to pop the lids off, especially the plastic trash cans. Use a metal can and secure the top with a thick rubber strap with hooks on the end, available at most hardware stores. You can also secure the can to a fence.

\*\*\* Raccoons often dig for grubs and worms. A gardener or nursery can advise you about a treatment to prevent grubs from living beneath your lawns. Placing piles of cayenne pepper in the place the raccoons dig may discourage them. Using a wild animal repellent such as Ropel, available at most hardware stores, may also be effective.

\*\*\* For a pond, horizontally submerge wire mesh around the circumference of the pond. Attach the outside circumference of the mesh to the edge of the pond, leaving the inside free. This way the fish have the center of the pond open and the raccoon cannot reach over the wire because it is unstable and they tend not to stand on it. Placing a "hot" or electric wire around the perimeter of the pond will discourage not only raccoons, but neighborhood cats. It can be made removable so family members can enjoy the pond during the daylight hours.

\*\*\* Metal guards, 18 inches or wider, wrapped around trees five or six feet above the ground, will deprive raccoons of access to nearby rooftops and other buildings.

\*\*\* If you have a raccoon who has established itself under your home, first find all the entrances and exits. Block all of them off except one. Place a radio near where the animal is nesting and keep it on loud during the day. Place ammonia stations near the same spot. If the nesting area is not accessible, try placing the ammonia stations at each of the air vents in the foundation.

Remember to leave an escape route for the animal. To know if the raccoon has left, sprinkle flour at the exit and watch for footprints that lead away from the exit. When you are sure the animal is gone, seal it up securely.

**IMPORTANT:** If you have a female with babies, be sure to give her extra time to relocate her entire family before you seal up the entrance. Do not lock the mother out. The young may die, leaving you

with a smelly mess or, more likely, the mother will return to retrieve her young causing damage to your home.

Raccoons prefer to live the easy life and don't like to be in a hostile environment. Very often once you start using the deterrents they move away.

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## Skunks

Skunks are members of the weasel family (Mustelidae). Although their markings vary, these busy tailed creatures are always black-and-white and absolutely unmistakable.

The most common are striped skunks, measuring 20 to 30 inches long (including the wide, bushy tail) and weighing 6 to 10 pounds (about the size of a house cat), with two wide, white stripes on its back that meet on its head; and spotted skunks, about half that size, with white spots instead of stripes. All skunks have small heads and eyes, pointed snouts, and short legs that make them seem to waddle. Their strong forefeet and long nails make them excellent diggers. They tend to be slow-moving animals, never in much of a hurry, and are generally poor climbers. A litter of from one to seven young, averaging five, is born from late April to early June.

Skunks are generally nocturnal and begin foraging at sunset. Skunks are omnivorous and help keep the rodent population in check. They often travel 5 to 10 miles within their territory at night, looking for field mice and other small rodents as well as lizards, frogs, birds, eggs, garbage, acorns, and fallen fruits. They also dig for insects, especially beetles, larvae, and earthworms. An estimated 70 percent of a skunk's diet consists of insects considered harmful to humans.

### TRY THESE TIPS.....

To discourage skunks from romping around your property:

\*\*\*\*It is important to check your property regularly to insure screens that bar entrance into your home or basement are intact. Close openings around decks, hot tubs, sheds and stairs. Skunks are great rodent predators and often follow mice and rats into these kinds of areas.

\*\*\*\*A three-foot high wire mesh fence, extended six inches beneath the ground surface, will keep skunks from digging under a fence.

\*\*\*\*Place ammonia stations around your yard wherever the skunks frequent. To do this, take a shallow dish or bowl, place a rag in it and pour ammonia over the rag until completely saturated. Place enough ammonia in the dish so the rag will continue to stay soaked during the

night. Avoid lawn areas, as the ammonia will burn the lawn. Animals find the odor of ammonia very irritating just as we do.

\*\*\*\*Skunks often dig for grubs and worms in your lawn and garden. Placing piles of cayenne pepper in the spot the skunks dig may discourage them. Using a wild animal repellent such as Ropel, available at most hardware stores, may also be effective.

\*\*\*\*Pick up all of your outdoor pet's food dishes before it gets dark. Replace them with an ammonia station. Lock pet doors to keep skunks from entering your garage or home, and place an ammonia station in front of the locked door.

\*\*\*\*If you have a skunk who has established itself under your home, first find all the entrances and exits. Block all of them off except one. Place a radio near where the animal is nesting and keep it on loud during the day. Place ammonia stations near the same spot. If the nesting area is not accessible, try placing the ammonia stations at each of the air vents in the foundation.

IMPORTANT: If you have a female with babies, be sure to give her extra time to relocate her entire family before you seal up the entrance.

\*\*\*\*If you or one of your animals is sprayed by a skunk we recommend the following products: Ryter's Odormute and Nature's Miracle Skunk Odor Remover, available at most pet supply shops. They have proven to be the most effective.

\*\*\*\*Skunks can carry rabies and other diseases. Although skunks are usually nocturnal, exceptions can include newly weaned skunks who are still mastering skunk behavior. However, rabies can also cause skunks to be active during the daylight hours. Typical behaviors of a rabies-infected skunk are walking in circles, falling, and being overly friendly or lethargic.

WE DO NOT TRAP OR RELOCATE HEALTHY WILDLIFE

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## Snakes

Unfortunately, snakes are often misunderstood. They are known to invoke hysteria in some humans.

What most people don't know is that most snakes are harmless to humans and will go to great lengths to avoid us. Small mammals are the normal diet of most snakes. They may feed on other snakes. Rattlesnakes are the only native North American venomous snake in California.

If you find a rattlesnake in your yard, the first thing to do is to make sure you have properly identified it. The non-venomous gopher snake is often mistaken for a rattlesnake because its defense is to act like a rattlesnake. They are basically the same size (12-48 inches long) and are brown and tan. They beat their tail on the ground imitating a rattlesnake's rattle.

Rattlesnakes are heavy-bodied, with a broad triangular head that is distinctly wider than their neck. The coloration is usually gray, tan, or green with dark evenly spaced triangular patches along the back and sides. They have vertically elliptical pupils and a rattle at the end of their tails. Because rattlesnakes can lose their rattle, do not use this as the only identifying factor. When disturbed, rattlesnakes will vibrate their tails. Young rattlesnakes are just as venomous as adults.

#### TO AVOID COMING FACE TO FACE WITH A SNAKE:

Take the following precautions:

\*\*\* Eliminate habitat for snakes around your home, such as rock piles, wood piles, tall grass, and undergrowth.

\*\*\* Remove any food that may attract snakes (including pet food and uncovered garbage cans).

\*\*\* Since snakes primarily feed on rodents, make your home and grounds rodent free. Humane trapping and other methods can control rodent problems, which in turn can control snake problems.

\*\*\* Be sure to plug openings in foundations, walls, steps, and porches to discourage snakes from making themselves at home in them.

\*\*\* Mow lawns and fields. Snakes cannot generally survive on hot, bare surfaces. So remove lumber, trash, bush, rock piles, and anything that might afford shade or hiding places.

Snakes generally do not attack people and rattlesnakes usually only strike in defense. The best thing to do if you discover a snake in your yard is to keep all children and animals out of the yard and away from the snake. In a few hours the snake will leave on its own.