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Living with Raccoons

Raccoons are found all over Ontario, in forests and towns and cities. They can adapt to live in a wide range of habitats.

Movements and home ranges of raccoons vary greatly. In rural areas, home ranges between one and four square kilometres are common. At the other extreme, the area used by urban raccoons may be just a bit larger than a professional soccer field.

Raccoons in the wild live about three to five years. The annual life cycle of raccoons consists of a breeding period during late winter and early spring, a growth and fattening period during the summer and fall, and a winter denning period.

Raccoons will consume practically any food item, plant or animal.

Predators include coyotes, foxes, wolves, owls and fishers. However, malnutrition and harsh winter weather play a greater role in limiting raccoon populations, especially young animals.

Conflicts happen

In urban areas, raccoons can cause significant damage to roofs, garages, gardens, and lawns. Raccoons may need to be evicted from buildings and attics.

In their search for food, raccoons can spill garbage and break compost bins.

Did you know?

Raccoons have amazing dexterity and use their front paws to pry things open, turn knobs and handle objects.



Please keep in mind...

Wild animals have the same basic needs as humans – food, water and shelter. Sometimes, humans and wild creatures come into conflict when animals are trying to meet their basic needs. Often, conflicts can be prevented if we're willing to make small changes to how we think and act.

People and wild animals live side by side in Ontario. We all share responsibility for preventing and handling human-wildlife conflicts. If you must take action against wildlife, please consider all your options and follow all relevant laws and regulations.

This fact sheet is one in a series about living with wildlife. The complete set is available at ontario.ca/wildlife.

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Conflicts with Raccoons

How Can I Prevent Conflicts?

Limit food sources

- Never feed raccoons.
- Pick fruit as soon as it ripens.
- Regularly pick up fallen birdseed.
- Keep barbecues clean and covered when not in use.
- Secure garbage in durable plastic containers with locking lids.
- Store garbage indoors until collection day.
- Keep compost in containers that keep raccoons out while allowing for ventilation.

Make your property unwelcoming

- Block off potential access points to your attic, garage, and other buildings.
- Secure the perimeter of decks, sheds and crawl spaces.
- Keep indoor pet food and any other food away from a pet door. Lock the pet door at night.
- Install a chimney cap.
- Trim branches near buildings to prevent easy access.
- Complete home repairs in the autumn, so mother and young won't be trapped inside.
- Use flashing lights, motion sensors and noise makers to deter raccoons.

How Can I Handle a Conflict?

If a raccoon is living in your home

- Install one-way gates to allow animals to leave while preventing re-entry.
- Do not permanently block the entrance until you are sure no animals remain.
- Never separate a mother raccoon from her young. Evict raccoons in autumn when young have left the den.
- Local animal control agencies can be hired to safely and humanely remove problem wildlife from your home.
- The easiest solution to removing raccoons from a chimney is to wait for them to move on their own. After eight to ten weeks, the female and young will leave and not return.
- If raccoons need to be evicted, do not smoke them out and do not pour anything, including naphtha flakes or mothballs, down the chimney. Adult raccoons can easily climb out of a chimney, but their young can't.

Lethal action is a last resort

- A landowner may humanely kill or trap raccoons that are damaging or about to damage their property. Firearm regulations and bylaws must be followed.
- You may also hire an agent to act on your behalf.

For more information and assistance...

To locate a local wildlife control agent...

- Speak with your neighbours, family, and friends. Look for "animal control" in your phone book or online.

To locate a licensed trapper...

- Contact the Ontario Fur Manager Federation at (705) 254-3338 or at furman@furmanagers.com

For information on raccoons...

- Call your local Ministry of Natural Resources office or the Natural Resources Information Centre at 1-800-667-1940.
- Check out Hinterland Who's Who - <http://www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?id=101>.

For information on how to prevent conflicts with raccoons....

- Toronto Wildlife Centre - http://www.torontowildlifecentre.com/pages/programs/faq_raccoon.html
- Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – <http://www.ontariospca.ca/4-wildlife-livewith-11.shtml>