



WildCare's Living with Wildlife Hotline 415-456-7283

## **How to Effectively Prepare Your Home to Prevent Wildlife Conflicts**

Use this guide to help prevent wildlife conflicts. Repairs done properly in the fall and winter mean wildlife won't see your home as a tempting shelter for spring's baby season.

Proper wildlife exclusion can be challenging. If improperly done, it can be expensive and harmful to the animals. You **MUST** determine that no animals are trapped inside before sealing any entry points. WildCare's Living with Wildlife Hotline can help 415-456-7283, and check local listings for a professional humane wildlife exclusion specialist in your area.

To follow the steps in this guide, you will be doing multiple circuits around your house, looking for specific things on each circuit. Keep a paper and pencil with you to take notes.

1. Do not seal ANY hole or entry point until you have tested any and all potential entry points and are completely sure that there are no animals inside. Keep this in mind as the #1 rule throughout any exclusion process.

2. Before you begin, do a little research. Know what animals are local to your area and their habits. You'll need to know which species prefer living in attics (bats, squirrels, raccoons) and which live under floors (skunks, raccoons). It is especially important to know how small or big a hole you can expect different animals to climb through. Most animals can fit their body through any hole that will fit their skull. Knowing which species are nocturnal and which are diurnal can help you feel confident no animal is inside asleep when you start repairs to seal an entry point. WildCare's free Living with Wildlife Hotline can help answer questions at 415-456-7283.

3. Get to know local animals' breeding times. Skunks start mating as early as January and February. Raccoon mating season starts soon after. Late fall and early winter are the perfect times to do repairs, as it's unlikely any animals will have helpless young in dens. If it's spring or summer, we highly recommend you call WildCare first (415-806-8637) or check local listings for a professional humane wildlife exclusion service, so babies will not be accidentally orphaned.

4. Do a walkthrough of your property before you begin. During this first circuit of your home and out-building(s), inspect the baseline where construction meets ground. You are looking for potential entry points. Keep your eyes open for chewing, digging, tracks, scat and urine marks. Look carefully for dirty marks and bits of fur against walls where animals may have passed frequently, and tell-tale bare or broken spots of vegetation



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that indicate animals pass frequently. In particular check areas where undergrowth touches the building and provides sheltered access. Disturbed spider webs can be a great indicator of an active entry point.

5. Check for loose and missing vent covers. If they are intact but becoming loose or compromised in some way, secure or replace them, even if there is no evidence that the vent is being used as an entry point.

6. Next do a circuit around the property looking at the roofline to inspect the soffits / eaves of the building(s). Look specifically for signs of chewing, and cracks or holes that squirrels, raccoons, etc. might use to get in. These should be sealed tightly (after making sure no animals are currently in residence). Remember that an animal can squeeze into any hole through which it can fit its skull.

7. Do a second pass around the soffits / eaves looking carefully at the corners and the join between the soffit and the roof. This time you're looking for signs of bats. Any cracks or gaps larger than ¼" wide are potential bat access points. Look for staining on the wall under a possible access point, and bat droppings directly under the spot and on the wall. It's important to distinguish between bat and mouse droppings on the ground. They look almost identical, but an area of droppings combined with staining up high indicates bats rather than rodents.

8. On the next circuit around your building, look outwards from the building to inspect the vegetation. Look specifically for any indication that animals might be using trees or bushes as access to the house. Any vegetation touching the structure is of particular concern, but many animals can jump a three-foot or smaller gap. Trim trees a minimum of four feet away from structures *and* fences (but only trim trees in late autumn to prevent damage to nests or orphaning of babies.)

9. Consider the types of trees on your property and what they offer animals for food and shelter. Pick up fallen fruit if you wish to discourage foraging animals from visiting your yard. Maintaining natural den and nesting sites in your trees and bushes may actually be helpful— if a raccoon has already "claimed" your property as her own territory by denning in a hollow log or branch, her presence may discourage another raccoon from scouting your attic for a den site.

10. Step back and do a survey of the full exterior of the building. Check any part of the building that is a join or separate from the main block of the building – gables, pillars, balconies, vents, roof joints, chimney flashing and joins, decks, stairs, etc. Don't forget the dryer, sub-floor and attic vents. Animals will always investigate joins, which are the weakest parts of a building's construction. If an animal finds his way in, it will usually be at a weak point where structures meet.

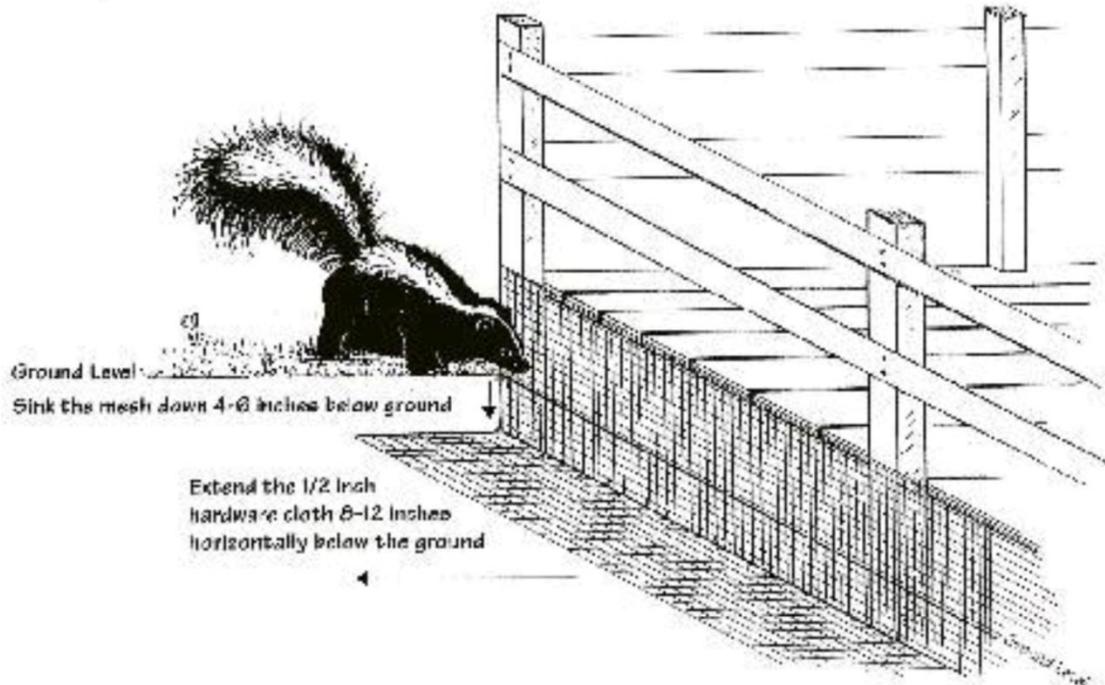


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11. Replace damaged wood, siding and roofing. Even slightly raised siding and roofing may offer access to wildlife.
12. Caulk any gaps—anywhere—on the structure.
13. Seal any gaps or holes in the foundation. These are especially tempting entry points to digging animals like skunks.
14. To prevent animals from making their home under your decks, do the following. Installing this barrier properly will prevent digging animals from accessing this tempting den site. This method keeps out rats as well.
  - a. Dig a trench around the deck, at least 12" – 18" deep (below ground level.) and then attach ¼" wire mesh (hardware cloth) to the bottom of your deck.
  - b. Bend the mesh at a 90-degree angle away from the deck into an 'L' shape. Make sure you have 18" – 24" of mesh as the bottom of the 'L' making a false bottom that animals can't dig through. This is the most important step!
  - c. Backfill with soil.
  - d. For a more attractive look, install lattice panels over the mesh.
  - e. Another method for excluding larger animals (skunks, raccoons, etc.) from under your deck or house is a product called Dig Defense. It is available online and at some hardware stores.

See diagram next page...

*L-shaped barrier for excluding animals from under decks, sheds, etc.*



15. Install a chimney cap to stop owls and other birds from getting trapped in your chimney and fireplace.
16. Install metal flashing on vertical structures that could be climbed, including trees that provide access to your roof.
17. Move any food items stored outside into the house or put them in metal containers with lids that can be secured tightly.
18. Sweep or rake up spilled bird seed daily.
19. Consider storing firewood in your garage or shed. Outside, it's the perfect habitat for wildlife.
20. To keep wildlife out of your fenced yard and domestic pets in, consider a Coyote Roller™ fence topper. <http://www.coyoteroller.com/>
21. Pick up fallen fruit from your trees daily.



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22. Secure the lids of your trash cans, and wait until the morning of pick-up to put them out.
23. Store domestic animal food in the house or in metal containers with secure lids. Bring in pet food and water bowls at dusk (along with your pet!)
24. Close and lock pet doors at night – with your pet inside!