

Preventing Animal Damage Handout – Know Your Enemy

Eastern Chipmunk

- Omnivores – eat fruit, seeds, nuts, sometimes worms, slugs, bugs, bird eggs and mushrooms
- Live in connecting underground burrows – 2” diameter holes
- Most active early morning and late afternoon
- Damage – digging up flowers, uprooting plants
- They have a half-acre range – so you might think of them as your own personal outdoor pets.
- They are food hoarders!
- Not true hibernators
- Highly territorial defending their burrows.
- One chipmunk can gather up to 165 acorns a day!

Eastern Cottontail Rabbit

- Herbivores – eat only plants (over 145 different kind of plants!) weeds, grasses, twigs, etc.
- Live in brush piles, thickets, burrows in winter
- Active at sunrise and sunset
- Damage – eating tender plants, damaging to winter shrubs
- Can run in a zig-zag pattern up to 18 mph
- Most live 2 to 5 years
- One cottontail pair of rabbits produce as many as 350,000 babies in 5 years with a mortality at almost 0!
- Remain active all year
- Only move short distances
- Clean cut of branches at 45-degree angles
- Strip bark from young trees

Raccoon

- Omnivores – will eat both plants and animals, fruit, veggies, and anything left out of your garbage!
- Live in warm, dry, quiet places – brush/leaf piles beneath decks/sheds
- Nocturnal – most active at night
- Damage – Eat garden vegetables and fruit, will raid garbage cans and pet/bird food left outside
- Active year round but do most damage in late winter, early spring as they are seeking out nesting sites.
- Can live 10 years or more
- Average weight of 10 – 35 lbs.
- Carriers for rabies

Skunks

- Carnivores – they will eat fruit, berries, bugs, grubs, mice and even pet food if left outside
- Set up nests under porches, sheds, in old log or woodpiles and dig their own burrows – may have as many as 10 nests throughout their range which can be up to 1 mile

- Active most often at dusk or dawn – crepuscular
- Damage to lawns and gardens by digging for insects/grubs
- Not territorial and will often winter with other skunks to keep warm
- Can spray (their defense mechanism) up to 15 feet!
- The only animal that will eat skunks is the Great Horned Owl – who has no sense of smell
- Breeding season is February till mid-April – this is also the most common time for dogs to get sprayed!
- #1 killer of skunks is the automobile!
- Skunk spray itself is extremely flammable!

Moles

- Carnivores – love grubs and worms
- Active dawn and late evening
- Damage – underground tunnels – they live underground
- Moles are small solitary animals that can live 2-3 years and weigh in at 3-5 ozs.

Voles

- Omnivores
- Live everywhere!
- Active dependent on species day and night
- Damage – extensive to trees/shrubs/plants
- Voles are small mouse like creatures that eat everything!
- Some species live in colonies or groups – doing much damage!

Whitetail Deer

- Herbivore – Eats only plants, twigs, bark, vegetables, fruit, nuts, berries
- Live in meadows, forested woodlands, brushy areas, and your backyard – range 1 mile
- Active mostly at dawn or dusk - crepuscular
- Will eat most any plant material at any time! Rubbing of antlers on small trees/shrubs can damage/kill them.
- Most deer damage occurs in late fall through early spring, when the animal's natural food sources are scarce
- A mature buck consumes between 4 to 10 pounds of food each day, including grass and other plants as well as buds and twigs.
- Can run fast (up to 40 mph) and jump 10 feet – vertically
- Have been known to eat up to a variety of 500 different kinds of plants
- Can eat mushrooms that are poisonous to humans
- 4 chambered stomach which helps them eat very tough plants/ chew – spit up and chew again
- Average age is 5 years.
- Males can weigh anywhere between 100-300 pounds, females 75-200.

What Can a Homeowner Do?

- First take a closer look
- Assess the damage Is the damage high on the plant or low?
- Who did it?
 - Gather evidence – tracks, scat, digging, etc.
 - Did you see an animal dodging down a burrow?
- How big a problem is it?
 - Is the problem something you need to act on, or can you tolerate it?
 - Consider options and cost
- Can you adjust your habits, i.e. move bird feeders, etc.

Management Techniques

- Habitat modification – scare tactics
- Exclusion – fencing
- Repellents – 3 types (taste, odor, combination)
- Trapping/removing

Habitat Modification

- Remove brush piles
- Secure garbage
- Control environment – grubs in lawn, clean up area – debris, food, etc.
- Feed/water your pets indoors

How to Deter Deer

- Deer are creatures of habit; once they establish pathways or a feeding area it is difficult to deter them.
- Deer are adaptable and learn quickly. Using a combination of control strategies is usually the most effective way to limit deer damage.
- Although no plant is 100% deer-proof, many plants are deer-resistant.
- Remove bird feeders
- Break their habits
- Plant deer resistant plants/natives
- Plant more food deer like closer to house
- Pick your battles
- Place netting over hostas
- Individual cylinder fencing around individual trees/plants

Repellents

- Use at first sign of damage
- Apply to tender shoots on windless 40 degree and higher days
- Reapply after rain

- Change type of repellent
- 3 types of repellents – those that affect the taste of the plant, those that create an offensive odor and a combination of the above two

Trapping/Removal

- Know the law!
- Trapping means euthanizing in most cases – that's what the professionals do
- Removal to another property ONLY with property owner's consent
- Know the law!

Summary

- Modify landscape to make it uninviting to wildlife
- Use repellents BEFORE damage is found and reapply
- Use fencing and barriers as needed and leave up well into spring – remove gradually
- Be persistent – the wildlife is!