

Deer in the Backyard; Squirrels in the Attic

Living in Harmony with Your Wild Neighbors



©KEITH BLACK/INDEX STOCK



©MICHAEL DEYOUNG/CORBIS



©ISTOCKPHOTO

Eight of every 10 Americans now live in urban and suburban areas. Each day in our local travels, we see woods and fields giving way to development, destroying the habitat and homes of wild animals. Forced to find other areas to survive, these animals have little choice but to try and cohabit with us. And that's when human-wildlife conflicts begin.

Deer munch on ornamental shrubs and trees. Squirrels and birds nest in attics and chimneys. Skunks tear up lawns to find insects. Bears and raccoons are drawn to trash cans or take advantage of pet food left outside. Geese cluster in parks and golf courses and crows roost in suburban neighborhoods. Animals are forced to cross highways, exposing them—and us—to collisions. People become increasingly annoyed, problems fester, the exterminator is called, animals are killed.

Now, there's an environmentally responsible, lasting, and humane answer. During 2006, we completed development of a new program called Wild Neighbors: Humane Wildlife SolutionsSM to help home and business owners resolve conflicts with wildlife while protecting the lives of the animals involved.

Through this program, The HSUS carefully removes wildlife from buildings and offers consumer education, entry prevention, and damage repair, providing a successful model for other groups and businesses to emulate. We intend to make these humane practices the established professional standard throughout North America within a decade, preventing the deaths of untold numbers of wild animals in the process.

The HSUS operates the largest urban wildlife protection program in the world, focusing on humane resolution of human-wildlife conflicts as well as the positive contribution that each of us can make in our backyards to provide sanctuary and habitat for our wild neighbors.

One of our major ongoing programs protects urban geese. We increased our cooperation with state and municipal agencies nationwide to stabilize populations and introduce conflict abatement programs. To keep flocks in check, goose control centers oil or shake eggs to render them infertile, or remove them from the nest. In Seattle; Detroit; Montgomery County, Maryland; and elsewhere, our intervention has worked to the benefit of thousands of geese who would have otherwise been rounded up and killed.

With our advice, the development and construction industry is learning how to minimize its impact on wild nature by adjusting building schedules to avoid seasonal events, such as nesting. In 2006, we used radio-telemetry to assess the consequences of moving highly vulnerable box turtles and other animals to protected areas. And we answered more than 7,000 calls to our wildlife hotline to the satisfaction of more than 85 percent of callers. Our goal: to be good neighbors to our wild residents.