

Instructor Introduction

Protecting Wildlife (Grades 3-5)

Students will learn about conflicts with local wildlife, why these conflicts exist, and basic humane solutions for protecting local wildlife while keeping them out of our homes.

Excerpts from the MSPCA's Statements of Belief:

“The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals believes that all animals exist in a dynamic state of interdependence with their environment, and that no animal is inherently a “nuisance” or “pest” animal. However, because their habitats are increasingly altered or managed by humans, certain wild species — or individual animals — may, because of their number, natural behavior, or presence in an inappropriate location, pose a significant problem for or threat to humans, other animals, or the environment.”

“The MSPCA believes that wildlife control programs should employ the most humane and least intrusive means for addressing wildlife problems. Programs employing preventative steps are most desirable. In most instances, the most effective approach to wildlife control is manipulation of the environment by such means as removal of food sources or prohibiting access rather than moving or destroying animals.”

The following bullets list the important elements behind this lesson plan. For more information on any wildlife questions, please visit www.livingwithwildlife.org, a companion program to the MSPCA, or contact an MSPCA Education Coordinator.

- many communities in New England have small pockets of woods intersecting with residential areas; this means that many wild animals will cut through residential areas to find more open, rural areas in which to live
- urbanization as a whole has resulted in fewer locations for local wildlife to establish their homes, which is another reason they settle in residential areas
- relocation of wildlife is illegal in Massachusetts because it can spread disease, including rabies
- when wildlife is relocated it is away from familiar territory and therefore has a lower chance of survival because it does not know where to find food, water, or shelter; a new ecosystem is threatened with the introduction of unfamiliar predators and prey
- there are private companies that “eliminate pests” for the public; this disposal is supposed to be done humanely, but there is no guarantee that these guidelines are followed
- elimination is not an effective solution to conflicts with wildlife; usually, it simply “frees” a spot for another animal to come along and possibly upset a natural balance
- the most effective solutions for managing conflicts with wildlife are the humane solutions: simply put, making the environment unattractive to the animal so it leaves on its own

- for humane solutions to common conflicts with wildlife, visit www.livingwithwildlife.org

- in instances where injured wildlife is suspected, it is best not to touch the animal
 - injured wild animals can be very dangerous, so it is best not to approach them
 - keep pets and children away from the animal
 - contact your local wildlife rehabilitator, police department, or animal control officer for assistance

- in instances where orphaned wildlife is suspected, it is usually best to leave the animal alone unless it is in imminent danger
 - parents often leave their young alone while searching for food or building shelter
 - wait from a safe distance and keep an eye on it; the parent will usually return within hours
 - touching the young may deter the parent from returning if it smells human scent
 - it is a myth that handling a baby bird will cause the parents to abandon it- however, they should only be handled in cases of imminent danger (for instance, if a fledgling has fallen from the nest and is in a dangerous situation)
 - if you notice a nest on the ground, it is okay to pick it up and place it back where you suspect it has fallen from (low tree branch)