

WILDLIFE AND NUISANCE ANIMAL INFORMATION

Human activities can attract certain wildlife species looking for an easy meal or shelter. Unfortunately, this can bring them into conflict with the interests of people, and the wildlife can be considered to be a nuisance. Nuisance animals, pests, and stray animals can cause property damage and can present a threat to public safety. If the improper interactions with humans occur, such as feeding or providing shelter, any animal can become a nuisance to the community. Below are resources to help you address these issues.

Alligators



Alligators are an important part of Florida's landscape and play a valuable role in the ecology of our state's wetlands. Alligators are predators and help keep other aquatic animal populations in balance. Because of their predatory nature, alligators may target pets and livestock as prey. *Generally*, alligators less than four (4) feet in length are not large enough to be dangerous unless handled. State law prohibits killing, harassing or possessing alligators. Handling even small alligators can result in injury.

DO NOT feed alligators—it's not only dangerous but also illegal. Although humans are not generally viewed as prey by alligators, a fed gator is taught to see humans as a source of food. Observe and photograph alligators only from a distance. Binoculars are the safest way to observe alligators. Approaching closer than 20 feet is risky as an alligator can jump six (6) feet into the air from a resting position and are known to run very fast. Keep children and pets away from the edges of lakes, ponds and canals. It is never safe to swim or play near freshwater bodies that are inhabited by alligators.

Persons with concerns about a nuisance alligator should contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) toll-free at 1-866-FWC-GATOR (866-392-4286) or visit www.myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/managed/alligator/nuisance/. The FWCC uses contracted nuisance alligator trappers throughout the state to remove alligators from locations where they are unwanted or unwelcome. Complainants must be able to grant legal access to the property on which the alligator is located. FWCC does not permit the removal of nuisance alligators from private or publicly managed property without first obtaining permission from the property owner or management authority. If a complaint meets the qualifying criteria, the FWCC will issue a permit to a contracted nuisance alligator trapper authorizing the removal of the animal. **The removal of the nuisance alligator is free of charge.**

Muscovy Ducks



Muscovy ducks are not a domestic animal and should be left to forage for their food naturally. These ducks are not protected by State wildlife regulations, but they do fall within State animal cruelty laws (Sec. 828.12, Florida Statutes). The City of Greenacres Public Works Department strongly recommends that people **DO NOT** feed the ducks. Their natural diet is comprised of vegetation and insects—both of which are abundant in our tropical climate. Additionally, feeding by humans makes the ducks reliant on such hand-outs and too lazy to continue foraging for their natural dietary items.

Raccoons, Birds, and Squirrels



Raccoons are intelligent, talented and adaptable creatures. They have very nimble hands, are very strong, and are excellent climbers. Many raccoons have no fear of people (or dogs), and thus commonly come into conflict with humans in urban settings. The most common complaint about raccoons is their scavenging of trash cans. Residents are encouraged to keep lids on their trash cans and keep them in a secure area where access is limited.



Birds, such as crows and pigeons, are often found in public areas, such as parks, buildings, shopping centers, and other places where they can find shelter. The problems associated with these birds are noise and unsightly and unsanitary excrement. Feeding by humans can make birds reliant on hand-outs.



Squirrels can easily adapt to human interactions, frequently using buildings as nesting areas. Squirrels can cause a fire hazard in homes by bringing in nesting material, and by chewing on power lines. Squirrels can leave behind a lot of droppings on park benches, gazebos, and playgrounds. They are attracted to these areas because of human behaviors. When people feed them or leave trash after they use park facilities, squirrels often become dependent on humans.

Africanized Bees



Both Africanized Honey Bees and European Honey Bees can be found close to the ground, in hollow trees and wall voids, utility boxes, abandoned tires, concrete power poles, and above ground in clean and dry nooks and crannies. If you happen to disturb a colony, get inside a closed vehicle or structure; the 10 bees that come inside with you are much less dangerous than the 3,000 waiting outside! Do not jump into a pool or pond; bees can wait longer than you can.

What you can do to protect yourself, family and pets:

- Inspect your property regularly for large numbers of bees and colonies.
- If feral colonies are found, have them destroyed by trained Pest Management Professionals who are knowledgeable about Africanized Honey Bee removal.
- Disturbing a defensive colony by untrained personnel could endanger people and pets up to 150 yards away from the colony.

Mosquitoes



Living in south Florida, you probably have had experience with mosquitoes. Most mosquitoes are active during twilight hours and at night; however, around the home, the mosquitoes that breed in discarded containers are active during the day. Mosquitoes need water to complete their life cycle; they can breed in almost any source of water. Pesticides are only a short-term solution to nuisance mosquito problems. Here are a few tips to eliminate mosquito breeding around your property:

- Remove standing water in old tires, buckets, drums, or any other containers
- Check clogged gutters and flat roofs that may have poor drainage
- Cover barrels and trash containers tightly with a lid or with a mesh screen
- Empty plastic wading pools and bird baths at least once a week and if possible store them indoors when not in use
- Store boats with a cover to reduce the amount of rain that can accumulate in them
- Level the ground around your home so water can run off
- Fill in holes or depressions near your home that collect water
- Fill in tree holes and hollow stumps that hold water
- Stock your ornamental water garden with mosquito-eating fish (e.g. minnows, Gambusia fish, goldfish, or guppies)
- Repair screening on windows, doors, porches, and patios
- Try a bacterial insecticide (available at local retail stores) specific to mosquitoes

Dead Animals

Dead animals attract all matter of vermin and disease, not to mention new nuisance animals which wish to feed on the carcass. If an animal has died on a public right of way or roadway, please contact the Public Works Department at 642-2071 for removal. If an animal has died on your property and you do not wish to dispose of it yourself, there are local professionals that provide this disposal in a proper manner. The Public Works Department cannot access your property to remove or dispose of animals.

Stray Pets

If you have lost your pet, you should go directly to the nearest Palm Beach County animal shelter to look for your lost dog or cat in the stray/reclaim kennels. If anyone has found a pet, they are required by law to report the information to Palm Beach County Division of Animal Care and Control's Lost and Found section at (561) 233-1282. Be sure to provide information about where and when the animal was found and a contact name and number for shelter personnel in case there are questions. Below is additional information that may be useful when encountering stray animals:

Palm Beach County Public Safety Department
Division of Animal Care and Control
7100 Belvedere Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33411
(561) 233-1200
E-mail: pbacc@pbcgov.org

Animal Abuse and Neglect: (561) 233-1200, press 0
Animal Attacks and Bites: (561) 233-1200, press 0
Dead Dogs or Cats: (561) 233-1200, press 0
Lost and Found Program: (561) 233-1282, pbcgov.com/snap
Nuisance animal complaints, rescue stray/injured pets and livestock: (561) 233-1213

Injured Wildlife

If you encounter orphaned wildlife on your property, please take time to observe the animal's behavior before attempting rescue. Many baby animals appear to be orphaned when actually they are being watched by their parents. Usually the parents will return once you leave.

There are many humane ways to control wildlife in 'unwelcome' situations and places. Please contact your local wildlife rehabilitator or Humane Society for further assistance. Wildlife rehabilitators can be located on the web by conducting an Internet search using 'wildlife rehabilitation' as the keyword. Local chapters of the Humane Society are listed in the blue pages of your telephone directory. Keep in mind that these are wild animals with unpredictable behavior, no matter how cute they look. Nature intended to keep them wild so one should not try to domesticate a wild animal.

Below is a listing of local agencies that can provide assistance with injured wildlife:

Wildlife Resource Center of the Palm Beaches (Royal Palm Beach)	(561) 793-8075
McCarthy's Wildlife Sanctuary (Acreage)	(561) 790-2116
Universal Wildlife Rehab Foundation (West Palm Beach)	(561) 791-3441
Ocean Impact Foundation Wildlife Care Center (West Palm Beach)	(561) 471-3403
South Florida Reptile Rescue (Palm Beach County)	(561) 641-9199
South Florida Reptile Rescue (Okeechobee County)	(863) 697-2082
Busch Wildlife Sanctuary (Jupiter)	(561) 744-1646
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	www.myfwc.com