

Neighborhood Wildlife Stewards

Teaching our Highlands neighbors how to live safely with wildlife and keep the wildlife wild.

Raccoons



Raccoon

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With its masked face, ringed tail, agile hands, and high intelligence, the raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) has become a popular figure in literature and film. Although raccoons prefer forest areas near water, they have become well adapted to life in urban settings, such as the Issaquah Highlands.

To prevent our neighborhood raccoons from becoming dangerous or destructive, you need to keep them out of your house, and never corner them or treat them as pets.

Raccoon health risks

Raccoons are susceptible to a number of diseases, including canine distemper, coccidiosis, encephalitis, listeriosis, parvo, pneumonia, rabies, trichinosis, and tuberculosis. Advise children to keep away from raccoons and make sure your outdoor pets are up to date with their vaccinations.

The most serious raccoon health threats to humans and pets are:

- **Rabies**
People and their pets can catch this viral disease from an infected raccoon.
- **Canine distemper**
Outdoor pets are at risk of catching this viral disease, which is similar to rabies.
- **Roundworm**
People and pets exposed to the feces of an infected raccoon can become infected with this parasite.
- **Leptospirosis**
Only people who regularly come in close contact with raccoons infected with leptospirosis are at risk of catching this bacterial disease.

Avoid attracting raccoons

To make your home and garden less desirable:

- Don't feed raccoons.
- Don't give raccoons access to garbage.
- Store food in secure containers and clean up barbecue areas after each use.
- Regularly pick up fallen birdseed.
- Fence your vegetable garden.
- Cover ponds at night when raccoons are most active.
- Feed pets indoors and keep them indoors at night.
- Prevent raccoons from entering pet doors (lock at night or put an electronically activated opener on your pet's collar).
- Eliminate access to potential denning sites (attics, chimneys, spaces under houses, porches, and sheds).

If the above measures do not deter raccoons, do not attempt to trap them yourself. The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife handles wildlife-related issues in our area. You can contact them at 1-877-933-9847 or visit <http://wdfw.wa.gov>.

For additional information about raccoons, see:

- Living with Wildlife: Raccoons
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/raccoons.htm>
- The Humane Society of the United States: Raccoon Fact Sheet
<http://www.hsus.org/web-files/PDF/raccoon-fact-sheet.pdf>

If you care about the welfare of the wildlife in our area, want to learn more about living safely with the wildlife, and would enjoy meeting your neighbors, join us for our monthly meetings. We are also looking for volunteers.

March's topic: Deer

Time and place: 7:00 p.m. on March 10 at Blakely Hall

April's topic: Bears and Cougars

Time and place: 7:00 p.m. on April 14 at Blakely Hall

Written by:

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