

Crossing Paths



WITH WILDLIFE IN WASHINGTON TOWNS AND CITIES

Fall 2004

New strategy will help species in need and keep common species common

by Dr. Jeff Koenings, WDFW Director

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is developing a new assessment that identifies species and habitats in greatest need and, at the same time, keeps common species common.

It's called a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) and we're working on it with other natural resource management agencies, tribes, local governments, and organizations. It will provide a dynamic vision for future management and a way for us to tap newly available federal grant funds for wildlife planning and implementing wildlife and habitat conservation projects.

Many of you longtime Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary managers may remember the national "Teaming With Wildlife" coalition effort back in 1998 that proposed a dedicated trust fund to finance state-level fish and wildlife recreation, education and conservation programs — the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA). Advocated by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and WDFW, this

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Make your fencing wildlife friendly

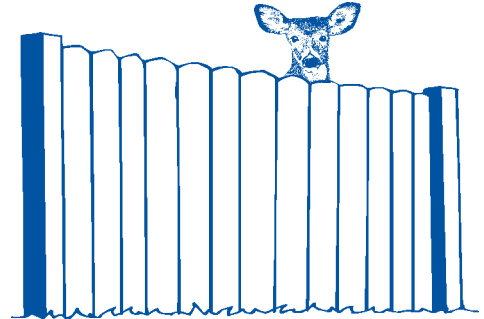
Whether keeping livestock or pets in, or wildlife out, fencing should be "wildlife-friendly" – fencing that doesn't lead to injury of wildlife, that is.

The most important way to keep a large owl, swan, or frightened lead cow elk from running into and getting hung up on a fence is to make it highly visible.

Placing a wood rail as the top layer of the fence works well as a visual barrier. If it's a wire fence, add four-foot sections of two-inch-diameter PVC pipe to cover the top strand of wire in places where deer or elk are known to jump. Simple flagging can also work to make the top wire more visible. A PVC pipe run along the bottom wire in spots can help animals find these easy places to cross under without injury.

To effectively contain horses or other livestock and allow wildlife movement, a fence need be no more than 42 inches high and the bottom wire or board should be no lower than 16 inches.

If barbed wire is used, consider replacing the top wire with smooth wire to prevent damage to both domestic and wild animals. Over time, as needed, replace all the barbed wire with smooth wire. Always keep all wire strands taut to prevent entangling animals.



Eliminate fencing over rivers, streams or other open waters where waterfowl use stretches of open water for takeoff. Many geese and swans, for instance, have been caught in barbed-wire fencing as they take off for flight.

Remove any unnecessary fencing that poses hazards to wildlife. If it works with your livestock management, take down a small section of fencing in winter that otherwise might be impeding deer or elk migration movements.

Consider planting shrub and small tree species that can serve as a fence line instead of traditional fencing. Many berry-producing shrubs in a hedgerow serve this purpose well and double as wildlife habitat, including thimbleberry, salmonberry, raspberry, blackberry, and snowberry. Wild rose and the taller species of Oregon grape are also good choices. Thorny shrubs like barberry and firethorn can create an intimidating barrier.

If you're trying to keep wildlife out of a garden or yard permanently, plan to invest what it takes to make the fence functional, aesthetically pleasing to your eye, and lasting. More often than not it's deer that are being excluded, and that requires a six to eight-foot high woven-wire fence tight to the ground (deer will and do crawl under fences if the food on the other side is tempting enough!)

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Crossing Paths is a twice-yearly newsletter for Washington residents enrolled in the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program.

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Living with Washington's Wildlife: Hawks

(Editor's note: This edition's excerpt from WDFW biologist Russell Link's new book, "Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest," covers a few of the most commonly seen hawks in Washington backyards.)

Hawks belong to a group of birds called raptors, or birds of prey, including eagles, falcons, ospreys, and owls. Raptors are powerful birds with sharp, curved talons for capturing prey and strong hooked beaks used for grasping and tearing flesh. All have an excellent sense of hearing, and their eyesight is the best in the animal world.

Washington provides a wide variety of habitats for raptors, including seven species of hawks that fall into two main groups: Accipiters and Buteos.

Accipiters are the forest-dwelling hawks, characterized by short, rounded wings that enable them to accelerate rapidly, and a long, rudder-like tail for steering around trees. Their flight pattern consists of several rapid wing beats, then a short gliding flight, followed by more rapid wing beats. The Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) and sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), are the two most frequently observed Accipiters in Washington.

The Buteos are known as the broad-winged or soaring hawks. All Buteos have long, wide wings and relatively short, fanlike tails. These features enable them to soar over open country during their daily travels and seasonal migrations. The red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) is the most common and widely distributed Buteo in Washington.

Adult Cooper's hawks are bluish-gray with brownish-orange horizontal bars on the breast and three black bands across the tail. An adult female is 14 to 20 inches tall with a 28-inch wingspan. The tail is longer and rounder than that of the sharp-shinned hawk.

The sharp-shinned hawk is almost identically colored but the typical female is 13-1/2 inches long with a wingspread of 25 inches. Males of both species are about 20 percent smaller. Because of their similar appearance, it is quite difficult to distinguish a male Cooper's hawk from a female sharp-shinned hawk.

The red-tailed hawk is a large, stocky hawk. An adult is 18 to 25 inches long with a 40-inch wingspan. Color patterns vary; typical birds have dark heads, whitish breasts with a darker bellyband, a whitish lower belly, and rust-colored tails. Young birds are duller and more streaked, and lack the rust-colored tails of the adults.

Habitat

Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks occur in areas with trees and large shrubs, including greenbelts, brushy edges of woodlands, shrub thickets and fencerows, as well as residential communities, cemeteries, and golf courses.

Red-tailed hawks occur in open to semi-open coniferous, deciduous, and mixed woodlands, grassy roadsides, rangelands, and agricultural fields with scattered large trees.

The size of a hawk's territory is variable, determined by the abundance of food and the number of available perches and nest sites. Hawks will fly several miles away from the nest in search of food.

Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks are often seen near pigeon and starling roosts and in the vicinity of bird feeders where they capture and feed on smaller birds. Less frequently, Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks eat rodents, frogs, lizards, and insects. Cooper's hawks will kill domestic pigeons and occasionally small poultry.

Red-tailed hawks are opportunistic predators and will eat anything from large insects, lizards, snakes, frogs, and turtles to voles and rodent-like mammals up to the size of a rabbit, occasionally taking poultry. They will also eat dead animals.

All birds of prey produce pellets to expel indigestible foods. When hawks consume feathers or tufts of fur along with their meal, they are not digested but are bundled into compact "pellets" and later regurgitated. Pellets are most commonly found under a hawk's favorite perch.

Reproduction and Behavior

The breeding season for all of these hawks begins as early as February,

depending on latitude and altitude. Pairs raise one brood each year. Their bulky nests can be located from 15 to 90 feet above ground in the crotch of a tree, usually near a woodland edge. Redtails often reuse an old nest, just adding a few twigs each year so that over time they may be three or more feet thick. The eggs are incubated by both sexes (mostly by the female) and hatch after 30 to 36 days.

The young grow rapidly and begin to fly at 23 days of age (sharp-shinned), 30 days (Cooper's), or 42 days (red-tailed). Juvenile red-tailed hawks may continue to associate with their parents for up to six months after they leave the nest.

Hawks will return to the same breeding territory for several years, thus staying together as a pair. If one of the pair dies, another hawk will acquire the mate and territory.

While Washington does have year-round hawk residents, some spend the winter months in warmer regions of the Pacific Northwest or further south. Spring migration begins in February and lasts until mid-March; fall movement begins in late August and ends in late October.

It is at these times that hawks are most likely to be seen around a bird feeder, flock of chickens, or other food source that attracts them while they are moving through. Those that remain here through the winter will also focus in on such prey concentrations.

Hawks use tall dead trees and branches as places to rest, look for prey, and feed once prey is caught. The tree's height provides the birds with a wide visual range, easy takeoff, and greater attack speed when hunting.

Where tall snags or dead branches don't exist or can't remain because of safety constraints, perch poles can be installed for hawks. This may be as simple as adding ten-foot extensions to fence posts and sprinkler risers in grassy fields, orchards, and woodlots.

Potential Problems

Once juvenile hawks have left the care of their parents in summer and fall, they enter a period where they must quickly perfect their hunting skills or starve.

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Watchable Wildlife support expanded with new decal

WDFW's new Watchable Wildlife decal offers wildlife viewers a way to support wildlife stewardship and recreational program efforts without having to purchase a hunting or fishing license.

For just \$30, the Watchable Wildlife decal package provides the decorative decal shown here; a one-year vehicle use permit granting access to and parking privileges at WDFW wildlife areas and water access sites across the state; a vehicle rear-view mirror hanger to keep your vehicle use permit easily accessible and visible; a copy of the "Washington Wildlife Viewing Guide" book by Joe La Tourette; and a one-year subscription to this Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary newsletter "Crossing Paths."

Funds from sales of this package help maintain current wildlife viewing facilities and activities, develop new viewing projects in rural areas, and maintain WDFW wildlife access areas.

To purchase a Watchable Wildlife Decal Packet, go to <http://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>.



New strategy will help species *(continued from page 1)*

was supposed to be the non-game "third leg" of federal aid to state wildlife agencies, along with Dingell-Johnson and Wallop-Breaux (fish) and Pittman-Robertson (game). Despite strong bipartisan support and a broad conservation coalition, Congress did not fund CARA.

But in 2001, Congress established a new Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP) to help state and tribal wildlife agencies address some of these same unmet needs. Through this new program, State Wildlife Grants (SWG) will be available for wildlife planning purposes and the implementation of wildlife and habitat conservation programs.

To be eligible for these grants, each agency must develop and submit to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) by October 2005 a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS).

To facilitate CWCS development in the 56 states and territories that will be eligible for federal funds, the USFWS established a small national team of state and federal authorities. This National Advisory Acceptance Team (NAAT) has been meeting to guide states in terms of content and approaches to be used. The idea is to learn from issues states have already struggled through. I represent the 16 western states on the NAAT, and will be responsible for recommending acceptance of each strategy to the USFWS.

We are employing both new and already-existing data and other information to develop Washington's CWCS. This includes the 2003 Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy Report from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Ecoregional Assessments currently underway in

cooperation with TNC and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). We're also using our own Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) database, the Washington Gap Analysis Program, the USFWS Species of Concern list, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's subbasin plans, Shared Salmon Strategies, and databases from the Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team, U.S. Forest Service, Partners in Flight, Pacific Coast and Intermountain West Joint Ventures, and U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Our strategy will identify problems, determine actions to be taken, prescribe periodic monitoring, include public involvement, and provide review and revision at intervals of no more than 10 years. The strategy will be linked to implementation of the agency's broader Strategic Plan.

This new strategy will consider conservation action options, at both ecoregional and statewide scales, that are feasible for WDFW as well as our public and private partners. Expansion of non-regulatory conservation approaches and public-private partnerships to address problems will be emphasized.

The public involvement process will include review by our citizen advisory groups, stakeholder groups, academia, and interested individuals like you. When we post a draft of this Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy on our website later this year or early next, I encourage you to take the time to review it and send us your comments and ideas.

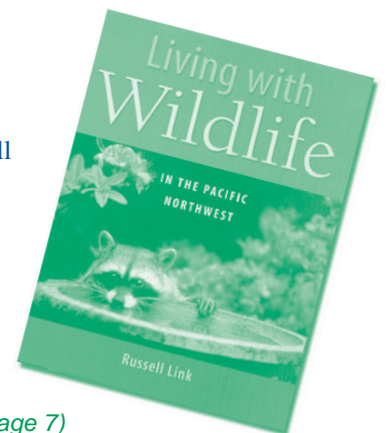
For more information on this exciting new effort, please contact WDFW staffer Chris Sato (satocls@dfw.wa.gov) at 360-902-2493.

New "Living with Wildlife" book available

The "Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest" book by WDFW wildlife biologist Russell Link – regularly excerpted in this newsletter – is now available for sale in WDFW's Mill Creek and Spokane offices, at bookstores, and soon over WDFW's Internet website.

This nearly 400-page book, published by the University of Washington Press in association with WDFW, is a valuable reference for homeowners, property owners and managers, habitat restoration professionals, private and nonprofit wildlife groups, and the wildlife control industry.

It includes 200 line drawings and information on 68 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians found in Washington, Oregon and British Columbia. It covers feeding and reproductive habits, dens and nesting sites, ranges, longevity, and animal signs including tracks, nests, scratch marks, droppings, and calls.



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Kestrel grabs meals at birdhouses

BWS managers Trudie and Jim McFall of Auburn are used to visits from predator birds like Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks, but this year they witnessed a colorful male American kestrel grab house sparrow nestlings right out of their birdhouses.

The kestrel first landed on the front of a birdhouse, looked in, then stuck his long leg inside, pulled out a baby sparrow in his talons, and flew off with it. The kestrel came back repeatedly for the next few weeks and systematically stole at least eight young birds out of three birdhouses.

"He even took an adult female sparrow that had unfortunate timing," Trudie wrote. "She had just popped into her nest to feed her young when he swooped up, stuck his leg in and pulled her out biting and screaming. She put up such a fight

that he landed on one of our inactive birdhouses and killed and plucked her right there."

At first Trudie was upset, but ex-falconer Jim reminded her that "this is nature's way and not everyone is lucky enough to watch it happen right before their eyes." He figured that the kestrel had a nest somewhere nearby and was feeding his own brood.

WDFW wildlife biologist Howard Ferguson says that was likely the case, and notes that such behavior is normal for falcons, which hunt with their talons. "They catch birds on the wing using their feet," he said, "so reaching into a nestbox is comparatively simple."

Ferguson also notes that house sparrows are exotics that aggressively compete with native birds for food and nest space, so the kestrel was actually



"doing needed population control."

For those who want to protect birds from such predation, Ferguson recommends adding simple nestbox hole guards (block extensions) to make the entrance deeper.

Washington's Wildlife: Hawks *(continued from page 2)*

these inexperienced hunters. Once hawks discover such an easy supply of food, they can be very persistent.

Cooper's hawks will attack small farm and hobby birds; sharp-shinned hawks are less of a problem due to their small size. Red-tailed hawks are too slow to catch a bird in flight, but they occasionally prey on pigeons and free-ranging fowl and domestic rabbits.

Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks occasionally eat songbirds that are attracted to bird feeders, but a hawk will usually kill only one bird per day. The occasional foray of a hawk or falcon into a backyard wildlife sanctuary is not so much a problem as an opportunity to witness a natural food chain in action.

Hawks pluck birds and mammals, leaving piles of feathers or fur at plucking spots or on the ground. The plucked feathers can be used to determine whether a hawk actually killed a bird or was simply feeding on one that had died of other causes. If the feathers have small amounts of tissue clinging to their bases, they were plucked from a cold bird that died of another cause. If the base of the feather is smooth and clean, the bird was plucked shortly after it was killed.

While trying to catch small birds, a hawk will occasionally get caught inside a building. If this happens, turn off all

inside lights and open all windows and other exits. The hawk should leave on its own. If necessary, a long pole with a T-shirt or flag at the end can be used to direct the bird out an exit. If these methods fail, a licensed falconer, wildlife rehabilitation center, or a wildlife damage control company can be called to assist in the removal process. Call your local WDFW office for contact information.

Preventing Conflicts

A large concentration of songbirds around your feeder can attract a Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk or other raptor, especially during the winter. Predation is a natural part of a well-functioning ecosystem. Hawks weed out the unfit and thus help maintain the overall health of the songbird population. Healthy songbirds can protect themselves by taking cover quickly. To facilitate this, you can provide trees, shrubs, thickets, and brush piles.

If you have a persistent hawk or other bird of prey hunting around your feeding station on a regular basis, remove the feeders for a few days and the hawk may move on.

Hawks will quickly learn the routines on a property if they are successful at catching prey on site. If a problem occurs, people flying pigeons or allowing other

domestic birds to feed unattended should vary the routine.

By far the best defense against hawks preying on domestic birds is to house them in a durable, fenced enclosure that will allow the birds to safely eat and loaf outside during the day. Such a structure can be constructed with a wooden framework that is entirely covered with one-inch poultry wire or similar netting. This outdoor run can be permanent and attached to a coop or other building, or be portable and moved periodically.

Where a complete and permanent enclosure isn't practical or desirable, escape cover should be provided. Birds have natural defenses at the sight of a hawk and will quickly squeeze under a nearby building, shrub, or other area. Escape cover can be made of planks, plywood, or chicken wire placed over logs, rocks, or bricks.

Simply increasing noisy human activity in the area will deter problematic hawks. Or use devices, like the "hawk globe" — a round mirror designed to scare an attacking hawk. If it is placed in the flight path the hawk uses, the hawk will see its reflection and retreat, giving domestic birds a second chance. Because hawks hunt on their own, they may avoid returning to a place where they perceive competition from another hawk.

WDFW seeks new wildlife-themed license plates

Vehicle owners could have several new options for special license plates in 2006 if WDFW design proposals are approved by a state review panel.

A collection of license plates with nine different wildlife-themed backgrounds using eagle, elk, deer, pheasant, bear, waterfowl, killer whale, salmon and crab images is proposed. Proceeds from sales of the plates would support a wide range of WDFW-related programs, including wildlife viewing, habitat enhancement, and recreational access.

As required by the Washington State Special License Plate Review Board, WDFW is gathering at least 2,000 valid signatures from potentially interested patrons for each of the nine plate designs. Deadline for submitting signatures is Nov. 19. The board's recommendation will be submitted to the Washington State Legislature as a bill for deliberation and possible adoption into law.

All designs and signature forms are available for viewing and downloading for printing at http://wdfw.wa.gov/license_plates/index.htm. Signing the form is not an obligation to buy a plate but represents potential interest. Individuals can sign for more than one plate design and would be allowed to purchase one for each car, motorcycle or travel trailer owned.

The proposed price of the special background plates is \$40 for new, and \$30 for renewals, in addition to the regular license fees.



Protecting bat house from predators *By Russell Link*

It was shortly after dusk on a warm July night that I heard an unfamiliar noise coming from the roof above the bedroom.

With flashlight in hand I quietly went outside to investigate, thinking I'd probably encounter a raccoon. To my dismay I found Mika, the neighbor's cat. She was perched on a bat house that for the past two years contained a nursery colony of little brown bats. When I returned with my camera, Mika was below the bat house swiping at bats as they exited to forage.

During the 30 seconds I observed this activity, the bat house appeared wide enough to prevent the bats from being snagged. However, my anger overcame me and I flung a handful of crushed gravel in the direction of the cat. Mika fled into the darkness.

As a bat house owner you need to be aware that predators can be a problem. Bat Conservation International Research Associates around the world have reported that bats sometimes abandon their houses because hawks, owls, house cats, raccoons, and snakes disturb the area in or around their bat houses.

Although bats move among bat houses within a season, when they do not return at the same times in subsequent years, predator problems may be the cause—assuming your bat house has not developed leaks or the crevices haven't warped.

Predator avoidance is a primary reason why bats prefer to roost in locations entered through the 1/2-inch to 3/4-inch

wide crevices suggested for bat houses. In fact, bats often reject houses with roosting crevices that exceed 3/4 inch in width. Even bats roosting in woodpecker holes squeeze into narrow crevices after entering through larger openings.

In Washington, Cooper's hawks and sharp-shinned hawks are capable of catching bats as they emerge from bat houses at dusk. These hawks are often seen in the vicinity of bird feeders, where they catch birds in flight.

Later in the evening, great horned owls and other owls are known to grab bats roosting on branches, or as they enter bat houses. Presumably to lessen the risk of being caught by owls, some bats elsewhere in the world drastically reduce their activity level during bright nights around full moon, a behavior known as lunarphobia.

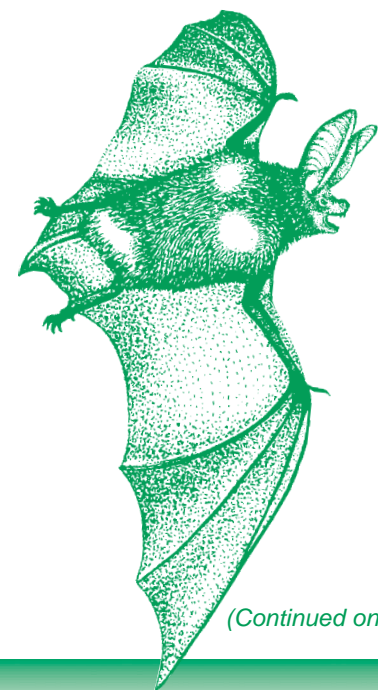
Because bats enter and exit bat houses rapidly, a hawk or owl needs to perch nearby to make a successful catch. This probably explains why bats prefer bat house locations in open areas away from large dead branches and other perches commonly used by birds of prey. Indeed, data suggest that bats prefer houses at least 20 feet from such perches. This is why bat houses mounted on trees are less often used than those mounted on the sides of buildings or on predator-proof poles located in the open. (Tree-mounted bat houses are also more vulnerable to climbing predators.)

Occasionally a hawk or owl will perch on a bat house located in the open.

Although this doesn't always cause a problem, it has scared bat colonies away from bat houses.

A variety of devices can frighten a hawk or an owl: increasing human activity in the area will keep them at a distance; yelling and clapping hands and banging cans together are all effective when a bird of prey is seen near a bat house. For obvious reasons these control efforts are rarely long-lasting. The best solution is to create a barrier that prevents birds from landing on top of the bat house.

Metal or plastic spikes have long been used to keep pigeons from roosting on



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Landscape downsizing *(Excerpted from an article by Steve Grant of [The Hartford Courant](#))*

To its devoted disciples, the move to smaller, more environmentally friendly lawns is kind of like watching grass grow.

Has the idea taken hold? Have homeowners, businesses and institutions begun in any real numbers to question the American ideal of a vast expanse of deep green, thick grass that goes on as if forever? Is anything happening?

Yes, said John Alexopoulos, associate professor of landscape architecture at the University of Connecticut, who, when advising clients, suggests a lawn no larger than necessary for the client's lifestyle. Having said that, he added, "I would say not as much as you would hope."

"It's kind of a quiet movement," said Glenn D. Dreyer, director of the Connecticut College Arboretum in New London, which sponsors workshops each year on ways to reduce the size of lawns, which typically demand repeated infusions of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and water to remain lush. "But as people think about it more, they realize maybe there are alternatives to all this chemical nonsense," Dreyer said.

Scientists say these lawns come at considerable environmental cost, and for at least a decade there have been efforts to rein them in. Excess nitrogen washes from the lawns, contributing to algae problems in rivers and estuaries, for example, and lawn mowers contribute to air pollution.

Gordon Geballe, associate dean and a lecturer at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies,

said he finds it paradoxical that people will hang a bird feeder in the same yard they bombard with pesticides that kill insects and plants the birds could feed on.

Things are changing, if slowly. Some towns, through their zoning, now insist that when subdivision land is cleared, stands of trees be left, which can help reduce lawn sizes once the houses are built. And many larger institutions, often motivated by the desire to keep labor costs down, have converted lawns that had to be mowed every week into meadows or minimal-care plantings.

Landscape Michael Nadeau converted 1,800 square feet of lawn into a rain garden where rainwater from drainage and roof gutters is directed into a low area that now has plants that prefer periodic inundation. "It's a neat way to allow rainfall to stay on the property," he said, "and it allows the use of plants you normally can't use." Gone is a big patch of lawn.

Landscape architect Ruth Parnall specializes in naturalistic landscaping of schoolyards. Through discussions with school officials, she determines what part of the landscape must be paved and what part has to be grass — for ballfields, for example. "Then everything else to me is up for grabs as far as not mowing," she said. Some areas will become meadow, some woodland edge, some shrubs, some wildflower meadow. She emphasizes native plants, and her landscapes become adjunct classrooms.

Even today, Parnall said, in a typical new subdivision, a couple of acres are cleared and planted in grass, with some ubiquitous shrubs that have nothing to do with local ecosystems.

"So it begins to look like any subdivision across the temperate U.S.," she said. "It loses regional identity, which is important to me. You lose that regional identity that the native landscape provides."

Making fence wildlife friendly

(continued from page 1)

A board fence or hedge that prevents deer from seeing a safe landing zone on the other side need be only 5-1/2 feet high.

Properly designed and maintained electric fences can also be effective at preventing deer from entering a garden or orchard. The high-voltage but low-amperage jolt delivered won't set fire to plants nor injure animals or humans. An electric fence with eight wires evenly spaced to 80 inches high is usually adequate to repel deer.

Keep dogs or other pets that may chase deer or elk in yard-size enclosures where wildlife won't be tempted to enter. In fact, keep those plants that you want to protect from such wildlife where you keep the family dog enclosed and you'll have a double deterrent.

Protecting bat house bats *(continued from page 5)*

ledges, window air-conditioning units, and similar sites. Adopting this idea, 20-inch long spikes made from 1/8-inch galvanized wire can be attached to the top of a bat house. Insert the wires into holes drilled in a piece of lumber attached above the roof. Radiate the wires out from the center in all directions like pins in a pincushion.

Commercial products available from farm supply centers and bird-control supply companies on the Internet include Catclaw®, Bird-B-Gone®, and Nixalite® (porcupine wire). Metal coils (e.g., Bird Barrier®) and even a slinky toy can function similarly. Another homemade

technique is to tightly string single-strands of steel wire (16-18 gauge) or monofilament line (80-pound test) between L-brackets installed at each end on top of the bat house.

Domestic house cats, raccoons and perhaps opossums can be prevented from accessing bat houses by placing them as high up the sides of buildings as possible.

To protect free-standing bat houses from mammalian predators, a predator guard can be installed around a tree, pole or other support used to elevate a bat house. Several variations are available on the Internet using the key words "bird predator guard."

While most Washington snakes are strictly ground dwellers, the racer, whipsnake and gopher snake will climb in the lower branches of shrubs in search of birds and bird eggs. A bat on the ground or perched in a tall shrub would unlikely be overlooked. However, no Washington snakes are likely to find their way up and into an elevated bat house.

The bat house above the bedroom has now been raised 8 feet above the roof and has two predator guards wrapped around its support poles. Last I looked (6/16/04) there were 24 bats occupying the house. Mika has not been seen nearby.

Natural gardening turns yard into wildlife haven

(Excerpted from an article by Levi J. Long of the *Seattle Times*)

In Leila and Dale Martin's back yard, moss grows wild on a toolshed roof. Old tree stumps, scattered throughout the yard, hold plants tumbling down aged trunks. Mason bees ramble up the southern wall of their Bellevue home.

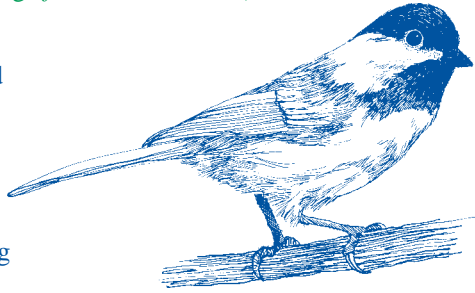
Martin, whose yard encompasses all things Northwestern wild, has been using natural gardening techniques since the mid-1950s, long before campaigns urging environmentally friendly yard care were created. She has taken up the use of natural methods to keep her garden a pesticide- and chemical-free haven for herself and for birds who've flocked to her yard.

For Martin, using native plants and environmentally friendly gardening techniques was a part of her childhood. Growing up in rural Bellevue during the Depression years of the 1930s, she learned to use available materials.

She said birds helped plant the trees lining her property.

"They dropped the seeds here and there, and I let them at it. There's no design work, it just sort of happened," she said.

Instead of using weed killers, she pulls weeds by hand. Instead of a gas-operated mower, she uses an electric mulcher to reduce air pollution.



To save water, she sets out a bucket in her yard to collect rainwater and seeks out drought-tolerant plants — such as the salal evergreen shrub and Mediterranean plants such as garden sage and rosemary — to reduce water use.

"There's a misconception that it rains all the time here, but it's still important to conserve as much water as possible," she said.

Seattle Public Utilities estimates that lawn watering accounts for more than 40 percent of summer water use.

The Martins' yard provides one of the best examples of how natural yard care can work and the positive impact it can have on a community.

For Martin, it means she can continue to listen to the songs of the sparrows, wrens and robins that perch in her yard.

"This is pretty much my sanctuary, as it is theirs," she said.

Deer repellent with oil binder works well

Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary manager and Master Gardener Pat Munts of Spokane reports that Plantskydd®, a bloodmeal-based deer repellent with a vegetable oil binder or fixative, works better than anything she's ever tried to protect plants from hungry deer.

Munts, who also works at a local nursery and writes a gardening column for the *Spokesman-Review*, swears she doesn't have stock in the company but just wants to share a tip for fellow gardeners who struggle with marauding deer.

Lots of repellents are made from bloodmeal, which studies show is more effective than bitter-tasting or pepper-based products because it smells like a predator. But they all wash off with rain or snow. The vegetable oil binder in Plantskydd® keeps it on the plant and effective for several months at a time.

Plantskydd® (translates as "plant protection") is made in Sweden where it was originally developed in 1991 for commercial forest plantations protection. It's available at many garden supply stores across Washington.

Munts advises using deer repellents of any kind BEFORE deer start tasting plants, as it's always easier to prevent problems than to break deer-feeding habits.



"Living with Wildlife" book (continued from page 3)

It suggests ways to safely view wildlife and techniques for solving problems and preventing conflicts, including eviction of animals from buildings, trapping, and hiring wildlife damage control specialists. Public health concerns and the legal status of each species are also provided.

WDFW's website [Living With Wildlife](http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/wildview.htm) section will soon add 25 of the most frequently encountered of the 68 species covered in the book to the series that now features cougar, black bear, moose and coyote (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/wildview.htm>).

"Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest" is just \$22 if purchased in person at WDFW's Mill Creek (16018 Mill Creek Blvd., 98012) or Spokane (N. 8702 Division St., 99218) offices. If you send a \$25 check, payable to WDFW, to either office with your request for a copy, (Attention: Book Sales), the book will be mailed to you. Some local bookstores also carry it for \$26.95. WDFW Internet website sales should be available by next year.

Streamside property must be pesticide-free

A federal ruling earlier this year restricts the use of eight pesticides within 60 feet of salmon-bearing streams in Washington — acephate, carbaryl, chlorothalonil, diazation, malathion, pendimethalin, trifluralin and 2, 4-D. Retailers are required to post warning signs by products containing those chemicals.

Crossing Paths



WITH WILDLIFE IN WASHINGTON TOWNS AND CITIES

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Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program

Westside: 16018 Mill Creek Blvd.,
Mill Creek, Wa. 98012 / 425-775-1311

Eastside: N. 8702 Division St.,
Spokane, Wa. 99218 / 509-456-4082

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will provide equal opportunities to all potential and existing employees without regard to race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, or Vietnam Era Veteran's status.

The department receives Federal Aid for fish and wildlife restoration.

The department is subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin or handicap. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any department program, activity, or facility, or if you want further information about Title VI or Section 504, write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240, or Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 600 Capitol Way N, Olympia WA 98501-1091.

Electronic delivery available

A few Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary managers are getting this newsletter via e-mail notification of its posting on WDFW's website, rather than a printed copy in the mail. If you want electronic delivery of future editions, send your complete name and current delivery address, along with your e-mail address, to newsletter editor Madonna Luers at luersmel@dfw.wa.gov.



Tell Your Friends:

◆ ◆ ◆ *Personalized Plates Help Wildlife* ◆ ◆ ◆

The Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program, along with other non-game functions of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), is funded by the sale of Washington state personalized motor vehicle license plates. These distinctive plates — in your choice of unclaimed word(s) up to seven letters — cost an extra \$46 for the first year and an extra \$30 for each subsequent year. You can pick up an application form at any state licensing or WDFW office, or by contacting the Department of Licensing at P.O. Box 9042, Olympia, WA 98507, 360-902-3770 (telephone menu option #5).

