

Living with Wildlife in Genoa

By Melissa Shaw Granat

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Living with wildlife provides a lot of enjoyment but obvious conflicts can and do arise. Understanding how to interact with animals such as deer, bear, mountain lion, coyotes, raptors and other birds, and a diversity of small mammals keeps the animals and us safe. With that in mind, let's review

Gardens may be at risk, but do NOT intentionally feed the wildlife...

a few key points about human/wildlife interactions with a particular focus on deer and bear.

Historically, bitterbrush and sage growing along the Sierra Foothills corridor provided ample food and shelter for the deer that migrate here for the winter; wild roses and blackberries in the riparian areas of the forest make good bear habitat. The number of animals living here was naturally determined by the amount of available food, natural predators, and other environmental factors that limited the population, a concept known as "carrying capacity."

As development occurs roads, buildings and fences fragment natural habitat and travel corridors and animals are forced into smaller and smaller ranges. At the same time, food that would not normally or naturally be available to deer or bear, either from intentional feeding, fruit from orchards, gardens, landscape plantings, trash cans, koi ponds and domestic animal food, have enhanced native habitat and increased the amount of available food within these smaller areas.

Deer and bear are very adaptable species and have become accustomed to humans providing them with food. An increase in the deer population in particular can result in a better supply

of food for predators such as mountain lion, and of course more unfortunate conflicts between animals and cars, and animals and humans.

The golden rule when it comes to living with wildlife is **DON'T FEED THE ANIMALS** (except for birds, which is another topic).

Intentionally feeding deer creates a false dependence by the deer on the introduced food and encourages them to approach humans. Deer can be dangerous and may aggressively kick or butt when they become accustomed to getting food from humans. According to wildlife experts, more people are killed or injured by deer in this country than by mountain lions or bears. Feeding deer increases the number of deer, and so feeding deer ultimately feeds predators too! Although mountain lions will usually choose to avoid any human contact or interaction, their population will increase with the food supply.

Bears love berries and native forage, but they become accustomed to getting a free, easy meal — right from

your trash can. A good strategy to keep bears from raiding your trash is to use a bear box. Remember the saying, a fed bear is a dead bear.

Finally, one of the most tragic yet all too common issues is the conflict between animals and vehicles. We have all seen deer and other animals lying on the side of the road, and yet this might have been an avoidable incident. Everyone has a responsibility to drive safely and this extends to watching for wildlife. The best way to avoid hitting an animal is to follow the speed limits, look for wildlife crossing signs, and SLOW DOWN WHEN DRIVING. Residents and visitors alike love our wildlife. Let's make it a good experience for everyone.

MORE INFORMATION

Nevada Department of Wildlife
(NDOW)—www.ndow.org

Report Serious Issues NDOW (bear or mountain lion) — (775) 688-1331
Minor Nuisances — Carson Creature Catchers — (775) 315-7124



Deer peeking through window in Genoa Lakes. Photo by Scott Wilson