



# Wildlife-Friendly Living

Wildlife-friendly living is about making everyday choices that create safe, welcoming spaces for the animals and insects that share our environment.

- ✓ Plant natives
- ✓ Reduce pesticides
- ✓ Conserve water
- ✓ Support pollinators



## Avoid Mosquito Spraying



It is indiscriminate and harms other insects, contributing to the decline in bees, butterflies and other beneficial species. Most baby birds are fed insects (especially caterpillars), so spraying has a very negative impact on bird populations. Sprayed chemicals can potentially harm aquatic life in local rivers and ponds due to runoff. Chemicals can also cause problems (allergies and respiratory issues) for people and pets. Spray kills only the adults present at the time of the spraying. Larvicides are much more targeted – they actually help to eliminate mosquitoes; other solutions are designed only to repel them. Options for controlling a mosquito problem include:

- Larvicide (Mosquito Dunk buckets/ Bucket of Doom)
- Wearing clothes that have been treated with Permethrin
- Dispose of standing water. Birdbaths should be refreshed often.
- Fans: Mosquitoes are weak fliers.
- Repellents: Thermacell, Citronella candles, Murphy's incense sticks.
- Deet or Picaridin: Most bug spray uses DEET

## Avoid Rodent Poisons

Rodenticides are anticoagulants. Mice don't die for several days, and during that time, they are preyed upon by owls and other natural predators, (including our pets, especially cats). The poison in the mouse kills the predator. (This recently happened to a whole family of great horned owls in Lincoln Park). The poison meant to kill the mice thus eliminates the very effective control provided by wildlife that prey on mice. There are many other options for controlling mice, which include:

- Mechanical or electronic traps, or catch and release systems. Google "mouse traps" for a large selection. Glue traps aren't recommended.
- Repellents. Cotton balls containing peppermint oil, cinnamon, hot pepper solutions, and ultrasonic products. Many available online or in hardware stores.
- Closing off points of entry into house with steel wool or duct tape. Mice can get through tiny openings.
- Housekeeping – remove food sources (food left out, bird seed).
- Wrap problem areas (especially in garage) in rodent tape.

## Include Native Plants in your Landscaping

Native plants provide the very foundation of life for wildlife: food, home, shelter, protection. The role they play, especially in providing for birds and insects cannot be overstated. Many insects rely on just a few types of plants and they are adapted to native plants, having evolved together for thousands of years.

96% of bird species (including adult birds that eat seeds) feed their babies an insect diet – especially caterpillars. The host plants for insects are native plants. A diverse collection of native plants is vital to the survival of these insects and birds.

All manner of wildlife use plants for their homes and protection. Every year, more and more native habitat is lost to development. With the largest portion of land in the eastern U.S. in private hands it's urgent that homeowners join the effort to offset this habitat loss. We urge everyone to plant a native garden. If you can't currently plant native plants, consider supporting or volunteering with organizations that protect or restore native habitat.



## Other Tips for Around the House

**Bird Strikes** – Birds don't see glass which can result in bird strikes on windows. Many birds die as a result of these collisions. Even birds that survive the collision may sustain injuries and require observation and treatment. A variety of products are available that make glass visible to birds. Feather Friendly is one of many companies that make such products. They provided the film that was used on windows at Chicago's McCormick Place, resulting in a 95% reduction in bird strikes. Solutions for homeowners include white and black markers, rolls of bird tape, and rolls of film with dots that can be affixed to windows.

**Window Wells** – Frogs, salamanders, turtles, baby birds, and many other small critters can fall into a window well and cannot get back out. A variety of window well covers are available, many at very affordable prices. Check Home Depot, Menard's or a local hardware store. These covers should be properly secured.

**Nets** – Soccer Nets, Fake spider webs at Halloween and similar items can entrap and entangle wildlife. After the game has been played, take the net down. Have a blast with your Halloween decorations, but try not to include the fake spider webs.

**Toxic Substances** – Substances such as antifreeze and batteries should be sealed and properly stored indoors.

**Fishing Line** – If you go fishing, make sure you pack up all the fishing line and hooks before you leave.

**Plastic Rings, Empty Cans and Wide-Mouth Bottles** – Birds and other small animals can get caught in plastic rings around milk and other bottles as well as 6-pack rings. Cut the rings before disposing of them. Wide mouth containers should be flattened. Care and thoughtfulness should be taken when disposing of possible traps.

**Wildlife Rehabilitators:** A wildlife rehabilitator may be able to help you if you've found a sick, injured or orphaned wild animal or bird. Two local organizations that can help are <https://flintcreekwildlife.org> and <https://birdmonitors.net>. For a comprehensive list try <https://wildlifeillinois.org>.

