



*Charter Township of  
West Bloomfield*

**Code Enforcement Division**  
(248) 451-4880

**LIVING (with) THE "WILDLIFE"**  
**IN**  
**WEST BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP**

With 26 lakes, 2500 acres of protected wetland and 3500 acres of protected woodlands it is reasonable to expect that we will need to share our Township with numerous forms of wildlife. Or perhaps, more appropriately, wildlife (the original occupants of the Township) will be sharing their habitat with us. In either case, we must find a way to peacefully coexist. This type of coexistence can be a challenge for both sides. It is our hope that this information will provide a reasonable and humane approach to dealing with these sometime sensitive and frustrating issues.

The research done in preparation for this report identified the most frequently encountered problems by our residents and humane solutions to help in dealing with these issues. It is our hope that this sensible approach to these problems will be beneficial to all concerned.

**Responsibility**

As is the case with most municipalities, the burden for the costs associated with wildlife control is the responsibility of the impacted parties. In West Bloomfield Township Animal Control services are provided through a contractual agreement with Oakland County Animal Control and this service is limited primarily to the control of domesticated animals. Therefore, our residents are left to deal with issues of nuisance wildlife on their own. In some instances residents may choose to utilize the services of independent contractors specializing in nuisance animal control.

### Selection of an Animal Removal Service

When preparing to hire a private contractor to provide this type of service, it is important that residents be informed consumers. It is especially important when retaining the services of a company to remove wildlife from your property. Residents should take the time necessary to address these important points:

**Make sure the contractor you hire is licensed by the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Insured.**

Learn how the contractor plans to address your problem. Here are some questions that should be asked and answered before you enter into an agreement for these services.

1. How much will you be charged per animal that is removed or is there a flat fee for resolution of the problem? If you are trying to resolve a skunk problem and trap a raccoon instead, what happens?
2. Be sure you have a clear understanding of what methods the contractor will be using to resolve the situation. Humane live trapping and relocation to a suitable environment is the recommended method of resolution for these types of situations. **These types of live traps must be checked daily (every 24 hours).** Traps should be placed in a location where they are protected from the elements. Animals that are left in these types of traps for an extended period of time may suffer needlessly due to stress and exposure.
3. Do not allow the contractor to remove a female adult without first capturing and relocating **any and all** off-spring that may be present. If left on site, the off-spring can create more problems than an adult. They may wander seeking a food source or die in inaccessible locations; resulting in odor control issues that may be very difficult to resolve.
4. Poison is not a recommended method of solving nuisance wildlife. The "bait" poison may be ingested by domestic pets or children. In addition, often times animals ingest the poisons then die in inaccessible locations.
5. Let your neighbors know of your plans, they may be a good resource for learning animals habits, routes and time of travel in the area.

### Try to Identify Why the Wildlife Finds Your Property Attractive

Wildlife is usually attracted to your location for one of two reasons, (1) proximity to a food source (2) they have discovered what they believe to be a

safe haven for nesting. By removing these attractions you may resolve your problem.

1. Decks, crawl spaces and attics that are not “animal proofed” are favored locations for raccoons, birds, squirrels, skunks and other critters looking for a place to call home. By making routine checks for breaks in vents, trim boards, chimneys and other access areas around the house you can prevent unwanted guests from establishing residency in your home.
2. Township ordinances now require that wood piles be elevated eighteen (18) inches from the ground. This detours wildlife and rodents from nesting in these areas.
3. Brush piles can also provide harborage for unwanted wildlife and rodents.
4. Always be sure your waste receptacles are clean and the lids are properly secured. Otherwise they will soon become a favorite stop for a midnight snack for critters in the neighborhood.
5. Birdfeeders frequently attract more than just birds. Please keep the ground around feeders clean to discourage other forms of wildlife and rodents from frequenting the area.

### Public Health Concerns

Most everyone looks forward to spring and the abundant promise of the warm months ahead. The new dark side to this rite of spring is the concern over contacting West Nile Virus. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) this virus has been found in over 110 bird species, as well as in horses, and more rarely in cats, bats, chipmunks, skunks, squirrels, domestic rabbits and raccoons.

West Nile Virus can be transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people who are bitten by an infected mosquito will not experience any symptoms; some may experience flu-like symptoms for a few days; and the CDC estimates indicate that “less than 1% of the people who get bitten and become infected will get severely ill”. Those at greatest risk of contacting fatal encephalitis are people over the age of 50.

Here are some prevention measures from the CDC and Department of Agriculture. There is currently no vaccine available for humans or companion animals to prevent being infected with this virus.

- Insure the integrity of insect screens around your home, porches, patios, etc.

- If possible avoid going outside in the early evening, at dusk or dawn.
- If you are outdoors during these times, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Please bear in mind that mosquitoes can bite through thin cloth.
- Consider using insect repellent (products with permethrin or DEET seem to be most effective) on your skin and clothing. Use insect sprays sparingly and cautiously.
- Get rid of standing water in all forms in the area of your home – mosquitoes often breed in these locations.
- Turn over plastic and vinyl wading pools or wheelbarrows and similar items that may hold water when they are not being used. Do not allow stagnant water in birdbaths.
- Keep roof gutter systems clean and unclogged.
- Ventilate ornamental pools or stock them with fish to control insects.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools that are not in use.

### Living With Our” Wild” Neighbors

In the following paragraphs we have identified some of the wildlife most frequently encountered in West Bloomfield Township that poses a concern to our residents. We believe a humane approach to dealing with human-wildlife conflicts may be most effective. This approach is based upon three general principles (1) respect for the environment (2) tolerance and understanding of other living things (3) willingness to resolve conflicts using non-lethal methods.

### Canada Geese

Once near extinction in the 1950's, this large migratory bird is now the source of widespread human-wildlife conflicts that have grown continuously since the mid 1980's. The problems are two-fold. Where geese graze they also defecate, often times making the human use of these areas undesirable. This problem can be much more significant when we find large numbers of geese occupying small bodies of water in urban settings. The waste from the geese which ultimately accumulates into these bodies of water does have an ecological impact that promotes degradation of water quality through elevated bacteria levels, nutrient levels and algal growth; while at the same time having no impact on the geese. On average, one goose produces one pound of droppings per day.

Programs involving the round-up and/or slaughter of these birds have been halted after proving to be costly and ineffective. The attempts at population control included an "egg addling" and egg replacement programs. While these programs have met with limited success, they are very time consuming and labor intense. These types of programs can only be successful if they continue on an annual basis and are conducted consistently throughout the impacted area (In our case any program will be much more effective, but unfortunately very costly if it encompasses the entire Township).

Community based programs that have been successful in controlling problem geese populations have succeeded for one primary reason, direct citizen involvement in a consistent effort to change the environment/habitat that these birds find attractive. These efforts start prior to the nesting seasons and basically amount to constant harassment of the geese to the point where they seek other locations. One local community purchased a trained canine used to "harass" the goose population. The purchase price of the dog was \$3,500. The annual cost for food and supplies for the dog, veterinary care and staff overtime to oversee this program was \$8,600. This was for one small community; for an area the size of West Bloomfield Township these costs would likely increase at least four-fold and do not include training costs of staff. Also, we must consider who is responsible for the care of the dog when it's not "working"?

One of the newest methods of population control involves feeding the geese a product (OvoControl) which prevents the development of eggs, limiting repopulation to within a few seasons. This program requires the purchase of the product, identification of nesting sites, daily feedings at the same time for approximately 8 to 10 weeks. This type of program could be effective if individual homeowners or homeowner's associations would be willing to accept the costs and commitment to a program of this magnitude. The cost for this product is estimated at \$12.00 per bird.

The first attachment is information regarding "Goose Management" that has been prepared and distributed by SEMCOG (Southeast Michigan Council of Governments) and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). These documents provide a number of suggestions and resources that citizens may consider when seeking out methods of controlling these problems.

In addition, we have drawn upon the resources HSUS from the website to address other wildlife issues that residents of the community may encounter. It is our hope that this information will be of value in dealing with these issues in a sensible and humane manner.

**Reference Guide** [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org)

- The Humane Approach to Human-Wildlife Conflicts
- Guide to Retail Sources for Products to Resolve Wildlife Conflicts
- Bats & Bat Facts
- Humane Approaches to Conflicts with Crows
- Coyotes are Here to Stay
- Solving Problems with Coyotes
- Civil War or Civility: How to Live with Urban Coyotes
- Solving Problems with Deer
- Frustrated By Deer Destroying Your Garden?
- Tips for Driving with Wildlife in Mind
- Road Rules: Young Drivers Must Learn to Yield to Wildlife
- A Taxing Situation: Highways and Wildlife During Springtime
- Road Runners: The Deadly Fall Ritual of Animals Crossing Roads
- Gardens & Wildlife: Making Everybody Happy
- Getting Groundhogs Out of Gardens
- Solving Problems with Moles
- Found an Injured or Orphaned Animal?
- Solving Problems with Pigeons
- Solving Problems with Rabbits
- Solving Problems with Raccoons
- Prevent Raccoons from Turning Your Chimney into a Day Care Center
- Solving Problems with Skunks
- For Skunks, Love Stinks
- Solving Problems with Squirrels
- Don't Trash Wildlife
- If you See a Turtle in the Road
- Solving Problems with Woodchucks
- Solving Problems with Woodpeckers

## Conclusion

This report was a result of citizen concerns about wildlife/ human conflicts in West Bloomfield Township. The area of greatest concern is the effect the large numbers of Canada Geese are having on our community. The information provided identifies potential solutions to these problems. These are (1) the altering of habitat in a manner that the geese and oftentimes humans find unattractive, (2) utilization of harassment techniques that can be costly, time consuming and aesthetically unappealing, (3) population reduction by egg alteration or food supplements that prevent offspring.

To be effective all these programs require a long term commitment and for the most part will be conducted on private properties throughout the Township. While citizens may look to the Township for solutions to this problem, residents must understand that the Township has no authority to mandate programs of this nature on private property. It becomes the responsibility of the impacted individual homeowners or homeowners association to develop a plan, commit the time, energy and resources necessary for a successful outcome.

It is recognized that dealing with wildlife issues can be a frustrating experience. A common theme in most all recommendations is that we as humans must not provide a habitat or environment that wildlife finds attractive. By eliminating these opportunities and discouraging wildlife from frequenting these locations or nesting in these areas, the problems will be reduced dramatically. Residents are encouraged to use this information as a guide to control troublesome wildlife conflicts.

In conclusion, it is understood that these types of conflicts can be nuisance and inconvenient. However, if we are willing to accept the bounties of nature, we must also be willing to find methods by which we can peacefully coexist with the ancestors of the original residents of our Township, the animals.

## Recommendations

Since it is apparent that the Township does not have the authority or the resources to address these nuisance wildlife issues, we may want to consider how we might best be able to assist our residents in resolution of these troubling matters.

The following is offered for the Township Board of Trustees consideration:

- The Board may want to authorize that the information contained in this report be placed on the Township website as a resource for our residents.
- Direct the Purchasing Department to investigate the possibility of purchasing some of the materials listed in this report, which are used to control the nuisance animals. These materials may be able to be purchased at a reduced municipal rate. This saving could then be passed on to residents who may be interested in utilizing these materials to control their wildlife problems. Obviously the Township can not guarantee the results of these products and if they are to be effective, residents must be committed to follow the recommendations of the manufacturer.
- Finally the Board should endorse only methods of control that are in keeping with all Federal, State and local regulations. Furthermore, these methods must be humane and not be intended to cause harm to the animals they are attempting to control. More importantly, these methods must not pose a danger to the well-being of the residents or the natural resources of the Township.