



# HOME & GARDEN

Home and Garden information center • 12005 Homewood Road • Ellicott City, MD 21042 • 1-800-342-2507

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## Wildlife Tips

### OCCURRENCES:

- This is snake mating season, their most active time of year. Snakes are beneficial creatures and should not be harmed. The most likely encountered large snake is the Black Rat Snake. It is about 5 feet long and found in rural and suburban areas.
- Many bird species are lively singers when establishing and maintaining territories.
- If you hear birds singing at night, it is most likely the Northern Mockingbird. They tend to be males that have not found a mate. Mockingbirds have the ability to imitate other birds' songs.

### NUISANCE:

- The USDA, APHIS, Wildlife Services program has a cooperative agreement with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Division, to provide the residents of Maryland with information on how to deal with nuisance wild animals. The program operates a toll-free Nuisance Wildlife Information Line: 877-463-6497. Normal working hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. People calling after hours, or on weekends and holidays, may leave a message on the answering machine and calls will be returned during the next work day.
- Seal off openings around doors, windows and vents to prevent wild animals from entering your house.
- Snakes in the garden help control insect and rodent pests. It is very unlikely that you will encounter copperheads or timber rattlesnakes in your landscape. These are the only two poisonous snakes in Maryland. Some harmless snakes, like corn snakes and hog-nosed snakes, have similar coloration as copperheads. To prevent entry into structures seal up holes, cracks, and crevices around the foundation. Remove stacks of firewood, excessive mulch, and weedy gardens close to the home.
- Keep bird feeders and bird baths clean and provide your wild birds with fresh water. Remove bird nests attached to your house after the birds have left to prevent problems with bird mites coming into your home. These small mites do bite people. Bird nests may also be found in rain gutters, and chimneys.
- Recycle aluminum pie plants and computer CDs by hanging them in the landscape. The reflective surfaces help to deter pesky birds.
- Woodpeckers may be heard tapping on wooden structures. This may be territorial behavior or active searching for insects. They prefer soft woods like cedar. Dissuade persistent woodpeckers by tacking up some hardware cloth over the area. Small trees may be protected from wood pecker damage by draping nylon netting over the canopy and trunk. Protect branches and trunks of larger trees by loosely wrapping ¼ inch hardware cloth or burlap around them.
- Squirrels will come to eat the bird food you put out even when your bird feeders are advertised as "squirrel-proof". To keep squirrels from robbing seed from feeders place a cover (baffle) over tube feeders or place a baffle on a post under the feeder. Keep feeders at least 15 feet from the house and vegetation so squirrels cannot jump onto the feeders.
- Squirrels feed on tender new plant growth and dig up seeds, flowers, and bulbs in search of food. Discourage squirrels by remov-

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ing access to food sources such as bird feeders. Rotate the use of commercial repellents. Protect individual or small groups of plants with a fine mesh netting or a floating row cover. To deter digging sprinkle crushed oyster shells over the surface of the garden. You can protect newly planted bulbs with a piece of one inch mesh chicken wire extending at least a foot beyond the edge of the bed and mulch.

- Moles and voles are very active now. Moles create raised tunnels in lawns. Control by tamping down tunnels with your foot whenever they appear. Moles do not necessarily indicate a white grub problem. They feed on a wide range of soil critters including earthworms.
- Voles create tunnels underground that are not raised. Look for entrance holes about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Sometimes tunnels are shallow and are open along the soil surface. Voles feed on plant material such as roots, bark, or the entire plant. Where voles are a problem try using mouse snap traps baited with apples or peanut butter. Cover with a shingle or piece of wood to increase effectiveness
- Rabbits can be a nuisance in flower and vegetable gardens, feeding on young and tender plants. They can be excluded with a low, 2 ft. high fence that is secured to the ground. You can also repel them with commercial repellents, bloodmeal, or by sprinkling hot pepper flakes around plants.
- Prevent deer from feeding on garden and landscape plants, by applying a repellent, such as “Deer-Away”, “Liquid Fence”, “Deer-Off”, “Hinder” or “Ro-Pel” to vulnerable plants. If deer pressure is heavy, try rotating repellents. Small deodorant soap bars and other types of repellents are used with some success. Polywire fencing connected to an inexpensive, solar-powered charger can successfully exclude groundhogs and deer. Grow plants seldom damaged by deer. See FS 655 Deer Resistant Ornamentals.

**Have a pest or gardening question?**

**Call the Home and Garden Information Center**

**800-342-2507 [www.hgic.umd.edu](http://www.hgic.umd.edu)**