

# Crossing Paths with Wildlife

All Information on this page is from The Colorado Parks & Wildlife Webpage <https://cpw.state.co.us/crossing-paths-wildlife>

## Introduction

As cities throughout Colorado grow, new or expanding subdivisions can impact wildlife habitat. Wild animals are often displaced by development. Some species are able to live in nearby open spaces, parks, undeveloped parcels of land, river bottoms, and on or near bodies of water. Others have adapted well to urban living; skunks and raccoons, for example, seem to thrive in and near cities.

As Colorado's population and desire for outdoor recreation increase, the proximity of humans to wildlife habitats can disrupt wildlife.

In most situations, though, people and wildlife can easily coexist. The key is to respect the wildness of wildlife. Wildlife is just that - wild. Most dangerous and potentially harmful encounters occur because people fail to leave the animals alone. Wildlife should not be harassed, captured, domesticated or fed. Intentional or inadvertent feeding is the major cause of most wildlife conflict, and it is illegal to feed deer, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, pronghorn, and elk in Colorado.



## Be Prepared to Cross Paths with Wildlife

### If you have concerns about an encounter with wildlife:

- ✓ Recreate during daylight hours; avoid dawn, dusk, and night.
- ✓ Go with a buddy or in groups when you walk, hike, or run.
- ✓ Make sure children are close to you and within your sight at all times.
- ✓ Reduce the likelihood of an encounter or an attack by being alert of your surroundings. Look around - Scan the sides of hills, behind rock outcroppings, under bushes and vegetation.
- ✓ Walk with a walking stick - this not only helps you on the trails, it can be used in the rare occasion of wildlife conflict.
- ✓ Bring bear deterrent spray and make sure it's stored somewhere handy.
- ✓ Carry a noise maker or rocks to throw
- ✓ Consider leaving your pets at home. They can chase, injure, or kill wildlife, or be injured or killed themselves if viewed as either a predator or prey
- ✓ If you bring your dogs, keep them leashed or nearby and under voice command.

## What do I do if I see an animal?

- ✓ Observe animals from a safe distance - Safe for you and safe for the animals. You can get a close-up view by using binoculars, a spotting scope, or a camera with a telephoto lens.
- ✓ Use the animals' behavior as a guide. Limit the time you spend watching if animals appear to be stressed
- ✗ Animals at rest need to remain at rest. Don't do anything that might make them move.
- ✗ Never chase or harass wildlife. Harassment of wildlife is unlawful, and can be extremely harmful.
- ✓ If you see young wildlife like calves, cubs, fawns, etc., their mother is usually close by. Do not approach the young animal, and leave the area quickly.

- ✗ Don't approach any wild animal, especially one that is feeding or with young, or behaving abnormally or aggressively. Most animals will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them an opening to leave the area.
- ✓ Move slowly and casually, not directly at wildlife. Allow animals to keep you in view and do not surprise them. Avoid direct eye contact; watch from the corner of your eye.
- ✗ Avoid known or potential den sites and thick vegetation that may prevent seeing wildlife.
- ✓ If the animals you are observing have their heads up, ears pointed toward you, or appear 'Jumpy' or nervous when you move, you are probably too close! Sit or Stand very quietly, without making eye contact, or move slowly away to a safer distance.
- ✓ Face the animal and back away slowly, if you can do so safely.
- ✓ Maintain visual contact with any predator so you can always see what it is doing - but avoid direct eye contact! If you look away, the animal could move and then you will not know where it is or what it is doing.
- ✓ Stay calm. Don't run or turn your back, and never climb a tree.
- ✓ If you have small children with you, protect them by picking them up so they won't panic and run. Try to urge them to remain calm and quiet.

## What if an animal becomes aggressive?

- ✓ Throw stones, branches or whatever you can get your hands on without crouching down or turning your back.
- ✓ Be as big and loud as possible. Raise and wave your arms. Open your jacket if you are wearing one.
- ✓ Try to convince the animal you are not prey and that you may in fact be a danger.
- ✓ If attacked, fight back. Animals can be driven away. People have fought back with rocks, sticks, caps or jackets, car keys, garden tools, and their bare hands successfully.
- ✓ If a wildlife conflict poses immediate danger for the animal or people in the area, call your local CPW office or law enforcement agency.

**Fort Collins Office 970-472-4300 and Denver Headquarters 303-297-1192**

## Don't Feed Wildlife

<https://cpw.state.co.us/feeding-wildlife>

### Feeding Wildlife is Illegal

Intentional or inadvertent feeding is the major cause of many wildlife problems. Under Colorado law, intentionally feeding deer, elk, pronghorn, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, mountain lions and bears is illegal. This law protects both animals and people as feeding wildlife is more harmful than helpful. There is a \$100 fine for any violators.

### Leave necessary feeding to Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

It's Colorado Parks and Wildlife's role to protect Colorado's animals and supplement feeding only when necessary. The agency launches controlled, emergency, and safe feeding of these animals only during extremely harsh winters or other rare hazardous conditions. Any other time these animals are better off left to obtain their food naturally.

### Feeding Wildlife Puts Everyone at Risk

#### - It invites unwanted and potentially dangerous guests

- For example, feeding wildlife like deer in your yard can also attract mountain lions, or uncleaned birdfeeders may attract bears.

- **Human-wildlife conflicts bring poor outcomes**
  - Bears have excellent sense of smell and a great memory. Feeding a bear, or allowing one to eat your trash, could be a death sentence for a bear. Bears that seek food from human sources may become dangerous, and a dangerous bear will be killed to protect human health and safety. Over time, predators such as bears, mountain lions, and other animals become less wary and more emboldened around people. They're more likely to attack pets and people, and when that happens, wildlife will be destroyed. Be part of the solution, keep food away from wildlife!
- **It disrupts normal wildlife behavior**
  - The normal feeding behavior of big game animals allows them to spread out as they graze or browse. Artificial feeding disrupts that behavior and prompts deer to crowd together in small areas where they are more likely to be chased by dogs, be hit by cars, and spread disease.
- **It causes disease in wildlife**
  - Feeding wildlife can increase stress and spread disease. Salt and mineral blocks, corn, and grain all facilitate disease transmission. These diseases take time to develop in the animal, so that individuals feeding wildlife don't see the direct negative consequence of their actions. Animals frequently develop diseases in areas where wildlife is fed and an individual animal can go on to affect many other animals.
- **Disease can be spread to pets and humans**
  - Diseases can spread between wildlife and livestock, and to domestic animals and people. Primary concerns are focused on devastating diseases, such as brucellosis and tuberculosis, which can be transmitted to humans, or Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza which has led to major losses of wild birds and for our agricultural industry.
- **Feeding can cause Fatal Diseases such as Acidosis and Chronic wasting disease (CWD)**
  - Acidosis is a severe and often fatal disease in deer, elk, bighorn sheep, moose, and pronghorn that consume an excess of high carbohydrate feed. Acidosis also can affect any ruminant species including cattle, sheep, and goats.
  - CWD is an always fatal neurological disease found in deer, elk, and moose. The disease agents, prions are present in saliva, feces and carcass parts of infected animals. CWD spreads through direct or indirect contact between animals. CWD is not caused by a virus or bacteria, and cannot be treated or prevented with vaccination. This makes it a real threat to the health and long-term sustainability of herds if not controlled through active management. More info can be found here <https://cpw.state.co.us/hunting/chronic-wasting-disease>

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## Leave Young Wildlife Alone

<https://cpw.state.co.us/dont-rescue-young-wildlife>

### Young wildlife don't need to be rescued.

You may see more young wildlife during spring months in Colorado, including deer, elk, pronghorn, moose, rabbits, foxes and birds. Because of this, Colorado Parks and Wildlife receives an increase in office visits and calls each spring from people who report they "rescued" young wildlife. People should know they do more harm than good by taking what they believe to be orphaned young wildlife from the wild. As wildlife becomes more visible in backyards, open spaces and on trails in the spring, Colorado Parks and Wildlife asks people not to disturb young wildlife.



Concerned citizens are welcome to call their local Colorado Parks & Wildlife office for reports, or Operation Game Thief if they wish to remain anonymous

Fort Collins Office  
317 W Prospect  
Fort Collins, CO 80526

970-472-4300

## Is it normal for young wildlife to be alone?

### Most young wildlife do not need rescued

- They have been prepared by nature to survive without human intervention. In most cases, human interaction does more harm than good.

### Adults leave to find food

- It is normal for adult animals to leave their young in safe places while they go forage for food for long periods of time. They are safer when left alone. If you find a young animal by itself, the mother is probably nearby.

### Parents are almost always nearby

- You may encounter a baby animal that seems alone or "abandoned". Usually, the parent is nearby but out of sight, and keeps listening for any distress from its baby.

### Finding birds on the ground

- Baby birds are fledging, or learning to fly, and often end up on the ground near their nests. If a young bird falls from its nest, return it if safe to do so. Or, place it in a box or basket with grass or paper towels and place near the nest (or secure it in the nearest tree where you found it). The parents will hear its cries and continue to feed it. DO NOT try to feed it or keep it as a pet.

### Parents protect from predators

- Baby mammals are scentless to prevent predators from finding them. When humans touch these animals, they impart them with a scent their adults will not recognize. This can result in the true abandonment of healthy offspring.

## What Should You Do?

### If you find young wildlife:

- ✓ If you find a wild animal that appears sick or injured to you, but has no clear injuries, leave it alone.
- ✓ Quietly observe the animal from a distance and don't hover so close that the wild parents are afraid to return to the area. If 24 hours go by and the parent does not return, call CPW (970-472-4300) for help. It is possible the newborn was abandoned or the parent is dead.
- ✗ Do not approach the animal
- ✗ Don't move the animal yourself. Moving the young animal can have negative consequences and cause undue stress to the baby and the mother.
- ✗ Don't feed the animal.
- ✓ Keep your dog on a leash on trails.
- ✓ If a young bird falls from its nest, return it if is safe to do so. Or, place it in a box or basket with grass or paper towels and place it near the nest (or secure it in the nearest tree where you found it). The parents will hear its cries and continue to feed it. DO NOT try to feed it or keep it as a pet.