



HELP WILDLIFE GET READY FOR WINTER

The longer nights and cooler days of autumn are a signal that our urban wildlife is busy preparing for winter survival. Babies born during late spring and early summer are finding suitable territory and locating enough food to sustain them throughout the cold months. Some species of birds, like the steller's jay, are seen more frequently as they migrate to the more temperate climate of the Lower Mainland. The autumn is a critical time for many birds, and there are some simple rules to remember when enjoying their company.

Having bird and suet feeders is an excellent way to help birds sustain their caloric needs. During the summer, nature provides enough food, but this food supply diminishes as winter approaches. If you do decide to have a feeder, it is important to keep it filled until spring, as some birds will become completely dependent on it during a particularly cold winter.

It is also important to keep your feeder clean and dry. As the amount of traffic increases to it there is a greater chance for the spread of disease. Wet, wooden feeders encourage the growth of mold, producing fungus spores that kill thousands of birds each year. In addition, wet seed mildews and rots, causing salmonella, and this can take a further toll on birds. Washing the feeder each week with a solution of dish soap and ten percent bleach can prevent this. Make sure it is dry before you fill it with seed.

On those days when the thermometer dips below zero, water becomes difficult to find. Keeping a fresh supply in a flat container near a bush or tree will suffice for drinking and bathing. Two inches of water is all that is needed, and like feeders, it is important to keep it clean.

The autumn is also a time to take measures to prevent raccoons, squirrels and skunks from taking up residence on your property. WRA receives numerous phone calls in late spring from residents who want these critters removed. At this point they have established a den for raising their young. Like many things in life, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Now is the time to do something about this! Uncapped chimneys, openings into attics, rotting roofs and loose shingles are all invitations for wildlife seeking a place to den. Make sure eaves and roof shingles are in good condition and that there are no weak areas or holes. Use heavy, rustproof 1/4" by 1/4" wire mesh to cover openings into your house, garage or shed (avoid the use of chicken wire as animals will tear the mesh and sometimes get caught in it). It is also important to make sure that there are no animals living in your house when you cover a hole with wire, as they will starve to death. If you have questions about this, contact Wildlife Rescue at (604) 526-7275. Autumn is a wonderful time of the year. Let's do all we can to ensure the survival of our wildlife neighbours.