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Introduction

We are exceptionally fortunate to co-exist with native wildlife in the Village at Castle Pines. Along with this privilege comes the responsibility of keeping wildlife safe and wild, at the same time considering the safety of humans and pets. We have multiple resources available to educate and assist us, including the Village Wildlife Committee, Emergency Services and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

We have moved into wildlife habitats, and our presence and activities not infrequently lead to human-animal encounters. Development in the Village displaces many animals from their normal habitats. We eliminate normal nesting sites, shelters and food sources. Some animals leave the Village altogether while others adapt to living near humans. However, displaced animals can become nuisance animals by using eaves, attics and chimneys for shelter, or by hunting for food in garages or vehicles or because they consider pets as food sources.

One step in understanding wildlife behavior is to consider the roles of predators and prey animals. Human activities, whether intentional or not, affect the balance between them. Providing food or protection to prey animals can attract predators. Limiting the numbers of predators can lead to overpopulation of prey animals. Attempts to relocate or even kill predators such as coyotes may backfire when other predators move in to take their place – or relocated animals return to the Village. Predator animals that we find exciting, such as hawks, owls or bobcats, may become uncommon if we eliminate the animals they prey upon, such as rabbits, squirrels or prairie dogs.

When wild animals damage our landscapes, get into our attics or threaten our pets, they are considered nuisance animals and questions invariably arise regarding relocation or extermination. Limiting the population of an animal often leads to increased birth rates. Relocation, except by licensed agencies, is illegal. Relocated animals often do not survive. Altering the habitat so that it is less hospitable is generally the better approach. “Animal proofing” strategies include sealing entries into attics, fencing gardens, keeping garage doors closed, keeping pet food inside, not feeding birds when bears are active and monitoring pets when they are outside.

The Village Wildlife Committee provides this as a guide to help residents co-exist with wildlife and reduce some of the adverse effects of human incursion into their habitats.

Village Regulations

With the exception of feeding birds, feeding wildlife on Castle Pines Homes Association properties is prohibited. Hunting and outdoor trapping are forbidden in the Village, as is the discharge of a firearm outside the home, including pellet and B-B guns. Wildlife that causes public endangerment should be managed by appropriate authorities, including Emergency Services, Colorado Parks and Wildlife or the Douglas County Sheriff's department. Homeowners may control pests in their homes but are required to work with the appropriate authorities such as pest control companies to deal with nuisance animals outside the home. This regulation is meant to ensure that other wildlife species, pets and humans are not adversely impacted by animal control measures or by dead or dying animals. Persons who harass or otherwise interfere with wildlife may be fined by the Castle Pines Homess Association. Pets must be kept under control at all times, whether on trails or in the homeowner's yard.

Birds



The Village is home to many bird species, some of which are here seasonally or while migrating and some which stay year-round. Common year-round songbirds include House Finches, Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees, White-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches, American Robins, Blue and Steller's Jays, Woodhouse's Scrub Jays, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, Black-billed Magpies, American Crows, and Common Ravens. Wild Turkeys roam the Village. In the summer we are treated to Lesser and American Goldfinches, Western and Mountain Bluebirds, Tree and Violet-green Swallows, House Wrens and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds. Dark-eyed Juncos often frequent yards and feeders in the cooler months. Some of the birds that migrate through in the spring or fall include Western Tanagers, Bullock's Orioles and Rufous Hummingbirds. We also see birds of prey such as Red-tailed, Swainson's and Cooper's Hawks, American Kestrels and, if lucky, a Great Horned Owl or Northern Saw-whet Owl.

Most bird diets consist of insects, seeds, berries and nectar, depending on the bird species. Raptors, such as hawks and owls, eat small mammals such as mice, voles, squirrels, rabbits and prairie dogs – and some hunt songbirds. Ravens and crows are scavengers and eat almost anything. Birds do not need human-provided food but do benefit from fresh water sources year-round. Because we live in bear habitat, the Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife and the Village Wildlife Committee discourage feeding birds from the first of April until mid-November. Bears and other wildlife find bird food to be a great source of nutrition that requires little effort to obtain, leading to unwanted reliance on human-provided food and potential human-wildlife conflicts. Feeding birds during the winter is not discouraged, but may attract raccoons, mice and other small mammals in addition to the birds. Winter feeding with shelled seeds, such as black oil sunflower seed, can lessen the mess under birdfeeders and reduce the numbers of unwanted visitors.

Development has impacted the availability of nest sites for birds that breed in the Village. Some birds are cavity-nesters, meaning they make their nests in cavities in trees or cliff-sides. Other birds create nests in trees or bushes and still others nest on the ground under bushes and scrub oak. Cavity-nesters often prefer dead trees to live trees since it is easier to excavate a hole in a dead tree. We have a trail system of more than 70 nest boxes that support breeding by cavity-nesting bluebirds, swallows, wrens and sometimes nuthatches. This trail system is monitored by Bluebird Trail volunteers each spring and summer and the results are reported to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology along with other reports from around the US.

The Forestry Committee, in consultation with the Forest Service, supports leaving some dead trees standing in open space and occasionally on private property, assuming that conditions are right and the trees pose no safety risk. The conditions include a degree of seclusion, some distance from structures and roads and no active pine beetles. Dead trees are not attractive to pine beetles and provide nest cavities and food sources for a variety of birds. Contact the Village HOA Forest Stewardship Committee if you have questions about whether a dead tree on your property can appropriately be left in place as a “wildlife tree”.

Birds can be attracted to our yards by plants that provide seeds, berries and nectar. Plants also support insects that birds eat. Native plants are preferred because the birds of the Front Range are more frequently adapted to them than to non-native plants. Denver Audubon and some nurseries can provide information about bird-friendly plants appropriate for the Colorado Front Range. Landscape plantings, bushes and trees also provide shelter and nesting sites. Insect eating birds, including bluebirds and even hummingbirds, benefit when pesticides are avoided or used judiciously. Herbicides used in lawns and gardens can adversely affect birds – even the lowly dandelion is a food source for hummingbirds, not to mention butterflies and bees.

Keeping birds safe

Songbirds can be attacked by birds of prey and domestic cats. Their nests can be raided by other birds, snakes or mammals such as raccoons - and domestic cats. It is estimated that cats kill more than one billion birds annually in the US. Pet cats should not be allowed outside except on a leash or in a fully contained enclosure. Discourage feral cats by keeping birdfeeders out of reach and not allowing birdseed to accumulate on the ground.

Pesticides in particular, but also many herbicides can be highly toxic to birds. Avoid using them near birdfeeders and nesting sites. Many songbirds are surprisingly sensitive to very minute amounts of pesticides, such as neonicotinoids, commonly applied to plants. Many nurseries will not sell plants treated with neonicotinoids; ask before buying. If you need to use pesticides around the house or landscape, spot-treat only the specific problem areas and avoid areas around water, birdfeeders or nest sites. As much as possible, avoid using them during the daytime when hummingbirds or bees are active. Poisons used for rodents can be fatal to raptors and scavengers that eat the mice, voles and prairie dogs that ingest them.

Birdfeeders and birdbaths should be cleaned regularly to avoid spreading infections caused by bacteria, mold or mites. Use a mild bleach solution and rinse the feeder well. Whole flocks can be infected by contaminated feeders and birdbaths. If you see sick birds you should remove your feeders, empty your birdbath and contact the Wildlife Committee at Wildlife@thevillagecastlepines.com for further information.

Birds may be stunned or killed when they fly into glass windows and doors. The American Bird Conservancy has information about products that can diminish bird collisions with glass <https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/>. Closing drapes or blinds does not prevent birds from flying into glass.

Bread and other baked goods should not be fed to birds; they do not provide the necessary nutrients. Large bread pieces can become lodged in their throats. Wild Turkeys that come to rely on humans feeding bread have become aggressive when feeding is interrupted.



Large Mammals

Deer and Elk

Bull Elk and two cows

Deer are frequent visitors to our open spaces, yards and golf courses. Elk reside in areas in and adjacent to the Village, such as Cherokee Ranch, and often feed in our golf courses and other open spaces. Both are affected by the loss of normal habitat necessary for food and shelter. Options for movement corridors other than golf courses are limited due to development and surrounding residential and commercial areas. Deer and elk are frequently seen crossing roads and even highways in search of food during the fall and spring seasons.

Deer and elk feed on grasses, bushes and trees in the summer. In the winter they rely on twigs and bark from a variety of trees including aspen and pine trees, as well as acorns of Gambel oak (scrub oak) and the nuts of pinecones. They do not have large enough fat reserves to carry them through a prolonged winter without adequate food sources. Most fawns and elk calves are born in May and June. Their survival is dependent on adequate nutrition of the females through the winter. Preservation of native vegetation and large trees is critical for food and for shelter from the elements and predators.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) strongly discourages feeding deer and elk even during harsh winters. Feeding is also not allowed by Village regulations. Feeding them encourages their reliance on humans, can spread disease in the herds, generally does not provide for their specific nutritional needs and can lead to aggressive behavior toward humans and pets. It also can attract predators such as coyotes. If supplemental feeding is necessary, leave it to CPW.

One of the most distressing results of increasing traffic along our highways and roads is the killing or injuring of wildlife. Animals often cross Daniels Park Road on the northwest, Happy Canyon Road through the middle of the Village, and all roads within the Village. Deer and elk can be difficult to see in the trees along roadways and at dawn and dusk. If you see a deer that has just run across the road, slow down and look around. There may be more animals on either side of the road as they follow the leader. Elk are generally easier to spot because they are larger and may travel in larger groups. If you see a group by the side of the road that seems to want to cross (for example, staring across the road), give them a break. Be aware that headlights temporarily blind and confuse animals, causing them to move erratically and unpredictably. Pull to the side of the road as far away from them as possible and wait for them to cross. Blink your headlights to warn oncoming vehicles. Older cows are generally the leaders in an elk herd and the first elk you will usually see. Be patient; you may get to see a big bull at the end of the group.

The importance of observing speed limits and staying alert and not distracted cannot be emphasized enough. If you see an injured animal or hit a deer or elk – or other animal – contact Emergency Services 303.688.6446 or the Douglas County Sheriff's Department, 303.660.7546.

Black Bears

The Village at Castle Pines is bear habitat, and we have resident bears as well as bear visitors from nearby Cherokee Ranch. The only bear in Colorado is the black bear, which may be black, brown, cinnamon or even blonde. The black bear is naturally wary of humans and nonaggressive. But like other wildlife, its behavior can change unpredictably, such as when confronted with an off-leash barking dog.

Bears may be active at any time, but are most active April through November, during morning and evening twilight. When not sleeping they are looking for food. Bears emerge from their winter dens in

late March to early May. Finding food becomes their primary goal. The diet of black bears is largely plant-based but they will eat almost anything. They must forage for huge amounts of food in late summer/early fall – up to the equivalent of 30 to 45 Burger King Whoppers daily - in order to survive winter hibernation. Most conflicts between bears and people are linked to food or garbage. Once a bear has found food which is easily accessible, it will overcome its wariness of people and visit the area often.

Bear sightings are frequent in the Village and surrounding areas. It is fine to see a bear at a distance, even crossing the edge of your property. However, we do not want bears to be so habituated to people that they approach houses or vehicles. Bear encounters can be avoided by keeping your garage doors and windows closed and locked, keeping outside vehicles locked and free of food and food wrappers, and not putting trash out until the morning of trash collection. Clean or burn off grease from barbecue grills and store grill utensils inside. Do not feed pets out of doors or keep pet food outside. If you must feed birds during the April to mid-November “bear season” (not recommended), hang bird feeders well away from the house and bring them in at night. Hanging birdfeeders from high branches or decks does not discourage bears; they are ingenious and very athletic when it comes to obtaining bird food.

If a bear approaches a house or deck, discourage it by hazing it with loud noises. Bang pots and pans, use an air horn or loud whistle, blast talk radio and/or yell from a safe distance. You should also notify Emergency Services (303.-688.-6447) so they can track bear activity. Hazing bears is generally effective **if** birdseed and other foods do not attract them back. If a bear approaches again, Emergency Services and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) can help identify what is attracting it and assist with hazing if necessary. **Hazing a bear may save its life.** If a homeowner does not take appropriate action to avoid repeat encounters, CPW can issue a citation. In the unusual situation in which removing attractants and hazing do not work, a bear may be euthanized if aggressive behavior arises.

Unlike bears that wander into urban areas, nuisance adult bears that reside in bear habitat such as the Village will not be relocated. Relocated bears either return or resume their unwanted behavior elsewhere and are unlikely to survive.

Coyotes

This wild canine adapts easily to new surroundings, allowing it to live in all types of habitats, including urban and suburban areas. When there is little food supply, the coyote produces fewer pups; when the food supply is greater, pack sizes are larger. Killing coyotes is often followed by larger litters from the remaining adults and/or immigration of coyotes from nearby packs. When coyotes are threatened by humans, they maintain cautious behavior and nighttime hunting methods. When humans provide an easy food supply such as domestic pets, garbage or pet food, coyotes can lose the fear of humans and become aggressive and will hunt openly during the day. Coyotes are opportunistic and if they can see into a yard and have an easy prey source, they take the opportunity. They exhibit very clever hunting methods, whether hunting alone or as a pack. The larger the available prey, the more cunning the tactics the pack uses to take prey. Coyotes then teach their young this behavior. Coyotes can even mate with dogs. That said, coyotes are helpful in controlling rabbit and rodent numbers in the Village.

Coyote attacks on people are extremely rare. In almost all known cases, the coyote lost its fear of humans because it had been fed by humans.

Coyotes are susceptible to mange, just as dogs are. Mange is caused by tiny mites and can be spread from animal to animal. Mange causes hair loss and eye infections, so that the infected animal loses protection from the cold and may lose vision. Coyotes with mange are more likely to move into developed areas and hunt during the day. They become weakened and die due to exposure to cold and inability to hunt. Dogs can become infected if they are in contact with a coyote that is scavenging through trash looking for food.

Do not provide an accessible food supply such as garbage or pet food, keep pets on leashes on walks, monitor or leash pets in the yard (even within invisible fences), and use loud voices and hostile noises to create discomfort for the coyotes. There are several coyote-deterrent products such as RO-PEL® available at garden, hardware or farm supply stores. Eventually, coyotes will adapt to efforts to make them less welcome and revert to their more cautious attitude towards humans.

Bobcats



The bobcat, named for its short or bobbed tail, is the most abundant and widely distributed of Colorado's three cat species and is present year-round in the Village. They are about twice the size of a domestic cat, generally 32-37 inches long, with a tail only about 6 inches long. They average about 15-35 pounds. They are easily distinguished from mountain lions by size, tail length and their spotted or streaked coats. They inhabit rocky and wooded areas. Bobcats avoid human contact as much as possible. They are largely nocturnal but may be active at any time of the day. The preferred prey of bobcats is rabbits, but they will also eat mice, birds, voles, and squirrels. Natural predators of the bobcat are Great Horned Owls and sometimes mountain lions, coyotes and domestic dogs.

Bobcats produce a single litter in April or May. The kittens can hunt on their own by the following fall and disperse into their own new territories by one year of age.

Bobcats are very rarely aggressive toward humans but may approach unprotected pets. Pet food left out of doors may attract them ;therefore it should always be stored indoors and not left outside overnight.

Mountain Lions (also known as Cougars, Panthers, Pumas)



Mountain lions are present year-round in the Village but are very elusive, so are seldom seen except occasionally on "critter cams". They are primarily nocturnal but can be active any time of the day. They weigh approximately 70-150 pounds and are 7-9 feet long, including the 2 ½ - 3 foot tail, with the male being larger than the female. The coat is generally tawny to light cinnamon in color. Only young mountain lions (under one year) have spots; they can be distinguished from bobcats by the long tail. Mountain lions have large territories, up to 100 or more square miles for a male and 20-60 square miles for a female. Since they have such large territories, the number of mountain lions that may frequent the Village is very small. Their favored prey is mule deer, but they will kill elk, porcupines, coyotes, mice and domestic animals. They tend to avoid humans.

Kittens are most often born in the spring or early summer and remain with the female for about 18 months. Females guard the young against the males who may kill the kittens.

Mountain lions are formidable predators, but human attacks are exceedingly rare. They can be attracted by food sources including pets and pet food. Like any other wild animal, their behavior can be unpredictable, particularly that of a female with kittens or one that is encountered while feeding on prey. If you encounter a mountain lion, make yourself look large, wave your arms and back away slowly. Do not turn your back. If the lion appears to act aggressively throw rocks or anything you can get your hands on without crouching down. Do not run: running makes you look like prey. Encounters with mountain lions should be reported to Emergency Services, Colorado Parks and Wildlife or the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

To discourage mountain lion visits, do not feed any wildlife except for winter birds. Mountain lions may also be attracted by unsupervised pets in the yard and feeding pets outside. Some plants, particularly non-native plants that deer often preferentially feed on, can make your yard more enticing to deer and in turn to mountain lions. Garbage placed outside can attract raccoons and other small mammals that are mountain lion prey.

Mountain lions have few natural enemies but are threatened by habitat loss. With such large territories that are becoming increasingly fragmented by development, they often must cross roads and highways so are exposed to the dangers of motor vehicles..

One last note: the only wild cats that inhabit our part of the state are bobcats and mountain lions. Lynx live in the high country, not along the Front Range.

Small Mammals

A Word about Disease Concerns

Smaller mammals can be a source of diseases that can be transmitted to humans and pets. These are collectively called zoonotic diseases; some can be serious or even fatal. These include rabies, Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia, West Nile virus, hantavirus, Colorado tick fever, bubonic plague and leptospirosis. The most serious of these, rabies, is most frequent in skunks, followed by bats. It is routinely fatal in animals but can be cured in humans if treatment is begun urgently. The best prevention for rabies is to vaccinate pets, including indoor pets since bats and other small mammals occasionally enter houses. Thanks to pet vaccination programs, rabies has become a rare disease in Colorado. For all diseases above, **avoid direct contact by humans or pets with dead or live wildlife and their urine or feces**, use proven insect repellants (such as DEET), and, for hantavirus, wear a protective mask when there is potential exposure to dirt or dust from rodent nests.

Specific information about modes of transmission of diseases, symptoms, treatments and preventative methods can be found online. Questions may be directed to the Tri-County Health Department (303.220.9200), your healthcare provider and/or your veterinarian.

Bats

Bats are among the most ecologically beneficial, yet unjustly maligned wildlife. There are a few species of bats that inhabit the Village during the summer, eating thousands of insects, such as mosquitoes, each night. They are also valuable plant pollinators. During the day, bats roost in caves, attics and under rocks, roofs and siding. Conflicts are confined to summer and generally involve individual or small numbers of bats roosting in sheltered areas of buildings or homes where they or their droppings may be unwelcome. These areas can be secured with wire mesh or netting at night after the bats leave to forage. Bat boxes may also be installed to encourage roosting during the day.

While it is unusual to see bats during the day, you may see one, especially a juvenile, roosting under roof eaves or in a tree. If you see one that is acting abnormally, such as hanging on the side of a building or on the ground during the day, it is possible it has rabies. Never handle a bat with bare hands. If you or your pet come in direct contact with a bat, even if you do not see a wound, seek medical or veterinary attention immediately. A bat bite or scratch can be small enough to easily be missed. A suspicious bat should be reported to the Tri-County Health Department 303.220.9200. If the bat is dead, place it (without touching it) in a Ziplock bag so it can be analyzed. The best way to prevent rabies in pets is to stay current with rabies vaccinations, including indoor pets since bats occasionally enter houses.

Squirrels

Most of the squirrels in the Village are fox squirrels. Fox squirrels are rodents that live in trees and eat pine seeds, fungi, buds, berries, insects, and an occasional bird or bird eggs. They bury food in caches in the ground for winter feeding. They also frequent bird feeders and can jump from trees to reach the seed. Rock squirrels (much larger than fox squirrels) and chipmunks (which are basically pygmy squirrels) are ground squirrels that can also climb trees. Wild bird stores can provide various types of baffles to discourage squirrels from reaching bird feeders. Many people enjoy feeding squirrels; feeders are available at wild bird stores.



Squirrels can become a nuisance when they nest inside attics, especially in cold months. Trapping and relocating squirrels should be done by a licensed pest control agency per Village regulations. It is illegal for non-licensed persons to relocate squirrels. However, you should know that removing squirrels from your property does not eliminate them permanently or even long-term. Squirrels in the neighborhood continue reproducing and the population is soon restored to whatever level is supported by food availability.

Squirrels in the attic can be evicted temporarily by using strong smelling commercial repellants or even ammonia-soaked rags. Be sure not to trap squirrels inside the attic by placing them at entry sites. To keep them out of the house and attic you need to identify and seal any possible entrances, such as small holes at joints of siding and overhanging eaves and where utility cables or pipes enter buildings. Some pest control agencies offer this service. Sealing holes is best done in the summer when squirrels are less likely to enter the attic.

Prairie Dogs

In the important relationship between predator and prey, Colorado's black-tailed prairie dogs play an important role. Prairie dogs are considered a "keystone species" since they support large numbers of other animals as well as plants. These rodents are prey to coyotes, hawks, eagles, falcons, badgers, bobcats and fox. Many animal species use their dens and tunnels for shelter, and their digging loosens the soil, allowing for more fertile plant life. The prairie dog population in Colorado has declined by more than 95% over the past decades due to habitat loss, hunting, poisoning and the plague. They have been removed from the Endangered Species Act list of threatened species, but there are several agencies in Colorado that advocate for prairie dogs and even assist with relocation. US governmental agencies developed pellets to inoculate prairie dogs against the plague in order to preserve the population. The Village has few if any prairie dogs left, something that may have ramifications regarding predator populations.

Voles

Are there runways in your lawn? In spring when the snow cover has melted from your yard, have you noticed anything new? If you think your yard is looking spongy or seems to have little mazes of shallow tunnels running through it dotted by small holes, you are not imagining it -you have prairie voles.

Voles are small rodents, often called field or meadow mice, measuring four to eight inches long. They are pudgy critters with small ears and short tails and vary in color from gray to dark brown. Voles are active day and night. They construct one to two-inch-wide surface runways and underground tunnels with numerous burrow entrances. They damage lawns with their tunnels and kill shrubs and trees by girdling the trunk or roots with their gnawing.

Vole predators include coyotes, foxes, owls, crows, and some snakes. Predators help control vole numbers but will not eliminate them completely. Habitat management is the most successful and longest lasting method of reducing vole damage to your landscape. To repair existing runway damage to your lawn rake, fertilize, reseed and water the affected area. As much as possible, eliminate ground cover or weeds and tall grasses by frequent and close mowing from spring through fall and applying herbicides where appropriate. One of the most effective ways to discourage burrowing voles, in limited areas, is to repeatedly break down burrows using a shovel or a hoe. Eventually, the voles get tired of rebuilding and will move to an area where they are undisturbed. Plantings can be protected by barriers that extend 3-6 inches below the surface and 18 inches above ground.

Voles can be poisoned by pest control agencies. The rodenticides they employ must be used with great caution. Some, including zinc phosphide and many anticoagulant pellets, can kill the scavengers and predators, including pets, that prey on the poisoned voles. Children and pets may be attracted to the extremely toxic pellets. The poisons can reduce vole populations but will not eliminate them completely.

Rabbits

The eastern cottontail rabbit, named for its fluffy short tail, is the most common rabbit in the United States. They are herbivores, generally light brownish in color, that reproduce rapidly. Most young however do not survive to maturity. Almost every predator we have preys on rabbits, including coyotes, foxes, bobcats, raptors and domestic cats and dogs.

Rabbits are most active at dawn and dusk and prefer to stay hidden in brush during the day. They may dig underground burrows to escape predators and the cold. They can wreak havoc on landscaping by eating just about anything that grows, especially young tender plants. Even plants labeled as “rabbit resistant” can be fair game. Barrier methods can be used to keep rabbits out of the garden and away from plants; barriers need to be at least two feet high sunk into the ground at least six inches. Rabbit repellants are less effective and are quickly worn off or washed off by rain.

Rabbits can carry the bacteria that causes tularemia, or rabbit fever. Humans and pets can become infected by direct contact with an infected rabbit, including handling or eating the animal. Tularemia is treatable with antibiotics but can be fatal if untreated. There is no available vaccine.

Nocturnal Animals:

Skunks, Raccoons and Porcupines

Skunks are one of the wildlife species inhabiting the Village that most residents never see. They are nocturnal animals that dig holes in lawns, eat garden produce, scatter improperly contained garbage, den under buildings, spray free-roaming pets, and leave an offensive, characteristic odor when they have been around. Like most potential wildlife conflicts, being aware of skunks and taking some proactive steps will help you to avoid an encounter.

Few people would consciously attract skunks to their home, but some homeowners' habits may do just that. Make sure there are no spaces under the house, outbuildings, or woodpiles where skunks could den or seek shelter. Fence gardens to exclude skunks and don't put any potential foods in a compost pile, even if securely fenced. Don't feed pets or leave pet food bowls outside, even in a fenced area of the yard. Skunks can dig. Keep garbage in cans in the garage and don't put trash out overnight. It is not legal to trap or relocate skunks in Colorado without a permit or other approval. You can call Colorado Parks and Wildlife if you have questions about what to do if you have skunks around your house.

Skunks are the most commonly reported source of rabies in Colorado. If you see one that appears ill or aggressive, it may have rabies. Do not go near it, keep your pets away, and notify the Tri-County Health Department (30.-220.9200), Emergency Services or the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

Raccoons readily habituate to residential subdivisions and can be entertaining to watch. However, with the exception of odor, they pose all the same problems as skunks, as well as possibly attracting large predators to your home. Taking the same precautions as those recommended for dealing with skunks will avoid most problems with raccoons. The most important of these is not to feed pets outside and bring in bird feeders at night to avoid attracting raccoons.

Porcupines are actually rodents. They are nocturnal herbivores, common in oak brush habitat. You may see a large, round, immobile or slowly moving blob in a tree – look more closely and you may see quills. Porcupines average two to three feet in length, not including the tail, and can be black, dark gray or brown. Occasionally one will be in brush on the ground. They have an unpleasant odor that generally deters other animals from coming close, but curious dogs can get a snout- or mouthful of barbed quills and require a trip to the vet. Contrary to popular belief, porcupines cannot throw their quills. They can cause tree damage due to eating the bark and twigs.

Predators of the above three species include mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes and large birds of prey. They are frequently victims of motor vehicles.

Common Amphibians and Reptiles in Castle Pines Village

- Frog
- Toad
- Tiger salamander
- Garter snake
- Bullsnake (also known as a gopher snake)
- Prairie rattlesnake

Snakes

The Village is home to a variety of harmless snakes and the occasional rattlesnake (our only venomous snake). Most commonly, you will encounter a variety of garter snakes and sometimes a bullsnake. Both range in length from two to over four feet. The bullsnake is easily mistaken for a rattlesnake because of its markings and coiling behavior when harassed. All snakes choose flight over fight when approached non-aggressively.

Snakes' body temperature varies with the environment. Consequently, we find them in cool shaded areas during the heat of the day and on warm rocks when the temperature drops. Their diet consists predominantly of rodents, insects and worms. They in turn are prey to eagles, hawks, owls and humans. Next time you encounter a snake in your garden, back away and let them carry on their important job of keeping our rodent population under control.

Protect Your Pets

Coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, bears, and birds of prey are all hunters of available food sources. Electrified, invisible fences may keep pets inside a yard, but they will not deter wildlife from entering a yard. Be aware that small dogs can be taken quickly, even if on a leash; be particularly cautious. Even larger dogs may be targeted by predators, especially after dark. Keep pets on leashes during walks off

your property for the safety of both the pet and the wildlife. Cats should remain indoors at all times; the Village is an inhospitable environment for all domestic cats due to predators and cars.

Avoid attracting predators to your yard by not feeding wildlife (except winter birds) or feeding pets outside. Do not keep pet food outside. Keep pets secure and under control at all times. Keep garage and outside vehicle doors and windows closed and locked. Remove food and food wrappers from outside vehicles. Do not place trash out before 5 am on trash collection days. Burn residual food off grills and keep grill utensils indoors. Remember that anything you do that attracts smaller prey animals, such as rodents or rabbits, can also attract predators that can be a threat to your pets.

Village at Castle Pines Wildlife Committee 2020