

For immediate release

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Contact: Mary Leake Schilder, 206-419-6646 or marys@paws.org

Prepare Your Home to Avoid Unwelcome Wildlife Visitors

With spring approaching, the Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) encourages homeowners to make necessary home repairs to keep wild animals from making dens and nests in their houses during breeding season. Because of human development encroaching on habitat, dens and nests are increasingly made in attics, basements and crawl spaces of houses.

PAWS fields hundreds of calls for advice when wild animals, such as raccoons and squirrels, have moved in. PAWS also receives hundreds of baby animals in spring and summer who have been orphaned when people remove adult animals from homes, unknowingly leaving babies behind. If not found, these babies suffer loneliness, starvation and dehydration.

"It's more humane and more effective for homeowners to take proactive steps to exclude wildlife from their houses before animals move in," says PAWS Naturalist Kevin Mack. "Trapping and removing wildlife does not solve human-wildlife conflicts and is, at best, a short-term solution. Other animals will quickly take the place of those that are removed if the conditions that attracted the animals in the first place are not immediately corrected."

Mack adds, "Squirrels are already giving birth, so it's crucial that people take action soon and check for babies before closing off any entrances."

PAWS recommends homeowners do the following:

- Check under the eaves, along the roofline, and in the attic for openings. Replace loose shingles on the roof. Animals can squeeze into extraordinarily small spaces, so seal holes and cracks in and around your house foundation.
- Prevent entry through chimneys and vents by installing screens and chimney caps. Keep dampers closed when fireplaces are not in use.
- Prune branches that hang over your house (being careful not to disturb any nests in the tree). To deter animals from climbing trees to access windows and roofs, remove lower branches and wrap metal cylinders around the trunk at least three feet from the ground.
- If you have a pet door, keep it closed and locked at night.

Ideally, if wild animals have already taken up residence in or under your house, wait until they leave and then humanely exclude them. Only when you are certain there are no animals, including babies, left inside, close the opening permanently.

If you cannot wait for animals to leave on their own, make their surroundings less inviting. Turn on a bright, flashing light and leave a radio talk show playing near or inside their den site. Many animals are sensitive to smell. If no babies are present you can place mothballs or ammonia-soaked rags in a container inside the den site to encourage an animal to leave. Deploy as many deterrents as possible at the first sign of problems in order to create a more successful result for both the animal and the homeowner.

For more information on humanely solving conflicts with wildlife, call PAWS at 425.787.2500 x817 or visit paws.org.

A Northwest leader in protecting animals since 1967, PAWS shelters homeless dogs and cats, rehabilitates injured and orphaned wildlife, and empowers people to demonstrate compassion and respect for animals in their daily lives.

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