

Wildlife's Requirements for Survival

All animals have three basic needs: food, water and shelter. These basic needs must be met during the time of the year when the animal is present. It is important that the food, water and shelter be arranged in such a way that they are available to the animal. Providing the correct combination of these necessities increases the chance of attracting desirable wildlife. If any of an animal's basic needs are not met, they will not use the site.



Food

Natural food sources such as leaves, nectar, fruits, seeds, berries, nuts and insects are necessary for attracting and keeping wildlife. Natural food can be supplemented through the use of feeders. Seed eating animals are drawn to seed feeders and to native seed producing plants. Nectar feeding animals are attracted to sugar water feeders and native plants that produce nectar rich flowers. Insect eating animals examine plants and sift through mulch and leaf litter that hold high insect populations. Avoid using pesticide that kills the insects that these animals feed on.

Increasing the variety of plants at a site attracts a greater **diversity** of wildlife. The greater the diversity of plants that are available at a site the more leaves, seeds, flowers, fruits and berries that are available to wildlife and to the insects and other small organisms on which they feed. Different plants grow, bloom and produce seeds and fruit at different times of the year. These differences between plant species help to provide year-round food for animals.

Water

All animals need water. A year round source of safe, fresh water will draw more wildlife to a site than any other single improvement. A water source can be something as simple as a shallow container set on the ground or as elaborate as a pond with a pump that filters and recirculates the water. Water sources are unusable if they are out of reach of wildlife. A toad cannot get a drink or lay its eggs in a bird bath. Water sources that have steep slick sides or are located near heavy cover where predators can hide are actually very dangerous for wildlife. The ideal water source has **accessible** shallow areas where wildlife can drink and bathe, but is not located near cover where predators can hide.

Shelter

Animals need protection from predators and bad weather and a safe place to raise their young. Animals also prefer habitats that provide safe routes between their food and water supplies and other cover. Different species of animals use different levels in the vegetation. If some levels of vegetation are removed, then so are the homes and travel routes for these animals. It is important that wildlife be provided with protection from bad weather in the form of **evergreen** trees and shrubs, hollow trees, brush and stone piles. Woodpecker holes in dead trees are used by a variety of wildlife for homes and nesting places. Bird houses can help to replace the loss of these dead trees.

