



To Feed or Not to Feed Wildlife?



Whether you encounter wildlife in your own backyard, one of our local parks, or while vacationing in a far-off locale, remember that feeding wild animals—no matter how cute or hungry they seem—can often result in more harm than good. The City of Massillon prohibits the feeding of wildlife (Ord 44 - 1992 Section 961.20). While coaxing a wild animal into close proximity with tidbits from your picnic or backyard barbecue may seem harmless enough, the long-term consequences of those actions are often disastrous—for both animals and people.

"People" food is not formulated for animal consumption. Foods manufactured for humans are rarely nutritionally adequate for animals and may cause serious health problems. This is particularly the case when animals gather to feed continually on human handouts such as bread, french fries, and popcorn.

When animals learn that humans can provide a cheap and easy food source, they often lose their natural fear of humans. The City of Massillon Parks Department is particularly concerned about feeding that habituates large groupings of animals, making for potentially unhealthy and dangerous animals to human habitation and presence. Once wild animals learn that they can boldly forage for human food, conflicts, nuisance behavior, and risks to human safety are sure to occur.

Wildlife fed from or near vehicles may result in traffic hazards and costly property damage when animals are hit or attempt to enter vehicles in search of food. For example, in Yosemite National Park in 1998, over 1,100 vehicles were broken into by black bears—causing more than \$630,000 in damages.

Animals who become dependent on human food sources may gather in abnormally large numbers, thereby aiding the spread of disease. Unnatural crowding and competition may result when wild animals gather together for food handouts from people. Such stressful conditions increase the incidence of fighting and injury among animals, as well as help the spread of diseases, some of which may be transmitted to pets and humans. The problems associated with Canada geese stem from the fact that geese prefer to graze on residential lawns, golf courses, and playing fields. Where geese graze, they also defecate. Goose feces can be a serious annoyance to golfers, ball players, and others using grassy areas.

So, please help us maintain a clean, safe environment for people and wildlife in the many beautiful Massillon Parks.