



## THE HAZARDS OF FEEDING WILDLIFE

Many people enjoy feeding wildlife because it allows them to have close contact or because they believe they are helping the animals. While seeing wild animals up close can be enjoyable, providing wild animals with a steady, human supplied food source nearly always leads to problems for both the animals and humans.

### There are many good reasons not to feed wildlife including:



flickr.com/Alan Light



flickr.com/Park Ranger

- **Feeding increases the chance of disease transmission to wildlife, people and pets.** When food is readily available, animals will gather in abnormally large numbers. By gathering animals together in unnatural groups, diseases can spread much more quickly.
- **Feeding can create unintended conflicts with humans.** Wild animals that are used to being fed by humans commonly lose their fear of people. Animals that are unafraid of people will approach them for food, and are sometimes mistaken as rabid, aggressive or mean, then killed for that behavior. An instinctive wariness of people is important to a wild animal's survival.
- **Feeding can degrade surrounding native habitat.** Wildlife habitat is negatively impacted when animals are unnaturally concentrated in areas where feeding occurs. Reproduction rates may also be affected when an artificial food source is readily available. In the wild, the number of animals being born is often directly related to the amount of natural food available. The number of animals surviving will also depend on how much food is available. This is nature's way of keeping a balance.
- **Feeding can lead to unhealthy animals and foraging habits.** Animals who are raised relying on humans for food may struggle to survive in the absence of that food source when they disperse from their parents' territory. Additionally, wild animals need a variety of foods in their diet, if they fill up on human provided food they will not get the nutrients needed to stay healthy.

**The best thing you can do to care for the wild animals on your property is to give them habitat, not handouts.** [Naturescaping](#) is a great way to provide the animals with natural sources of food and shelter that will not put them in danger the way a human provided food source will. You will still be able to enjoy wildlife on your property, but at a safe distance for both you and the animals.