

Course- WL- 707 Terrestrial Wildlife
Management
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5th Lecture

Urban Wildlife

Urban wildlife is wildlife that can live or thrive in urban environments. Some urban wildlife, such as house mice, are synanthropic, ecologically associated with humans. Some species or populations may become entirely dependent on humans. These species represent a minority of the creatures that would normally inhabit an area. For example, as compilation of studies found that only 8% of native bird and 25% of native plant species were present in urban areas compared with estimates of non-urban density of species.

What is Urban Wildlife?

Urban wildlife animal communities consist of species that utilize human dominated ecosystems. Although urban species vary in their use and exploitation of developed areas, they all come into contact with humans either in cities or on the woodland-urban interface. Examples of common urban wildlife species in the United States include both native species (e.g. raccoons, red-tailed hawks, and coyotes) and invasive species (English sparrows, European starlings, house mice, rock doves, and Norwegian rats).

Characteristics of successful urban wildlife:

- May utilize human food sources, such as birdfeeders, garbage, or pet food
- Are typically omnivorous and generalists with regard to food and habitat

- Are often strong competitors and can exclude native species
- May have a higher tolerance of human disturbance
- Can change their behavior and adapt to major environmental disturbances

Types of Urban Wildlife

Human obligates might not be considered wildlife by some because they are often domestic animals, however they play a major role in urban wildlife community composition. Obligates compete with, disturb, and most importantly, predate upon native species. Species interactions between obligates and natives greatly influence community function and diversity both in and on the fringes of urban development. Domestic cats in particular

Human associates and exploiters are often generalist or omnivorous species that can take advantage of anthropogenic resource subsidies, or food supplied by humans. Human food sources can take the form of gardens, garbage, domestic animals, pet food, or other human exploiters.

Human adapters are species that may utilize human resources and survive in human dominated areas, but do not necessarily receive an added benefit from living with humans.

Human avoiders are not expected to use urban areas, but occasionally may find themselves amongst people when attempting to disperse or migrate these species can experience high mortality rates or decreased reproductive rates in human dominated habitats. Mountain lions, for example, are human avoiders, but occasionally come into conflict with human communities by eating livestock or pets.

THREATS TO URBAN WILDLIFE

Urban ecosystems are often comprised of similar disturbances, including:

- Habitat loss
- Light and noise pollution
- Invasive specie
- Chemical runoff and pollution
- Habitat fragmentation

Are known for their impressive predatory skills and their impacts on native and migratory bird species.

REDUCING HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

One of the best ways to avoid human-wildlife conflict is to reduce attractants for unwanted animals. To reduce conflict with urban wildlife, residents can:

- Lock all outdoor garbage cans
- Regularly dispose of fallen fruit from fruit trees
- Keep pets indoors at night
- Keep goats, sheep, and chickens in a covered enclosure at night
- Keep cats indoors as much as possible, especially when migratory birds are in the area
- Use birdfeeders specifically designed not to spill or be accessible by non-target species
- Be aware of any wildlife-borne diseases in your region that could infect you or your pet

Examples:

Mice are carriers of bacteria and parasite and the urine or droppings they leave behind can cause diseases as serious as meningitis or encephalitis. Mice extermination techniques are usually gruesome.

Foxes can carry rabies, a viral and potentially deadly disease that affects the nervous system. Although much research has focused on the issue, urban foxes actually pose a minor threat in the transmission of rabies and mange. Yet fear of foxes is quite widespread and the methods to keep them away range from ultrasonic fox deterrents to live traps.