






ADAPTING TO URBAN LIFE

Grades 3 to 6 – Individual, small group

Did you know that wild species have existed for thousands, or even millions, of years? Even the earliest Canadian cities are only a few hundred years old - wild animals lived in these areas long before cities developed! As humans changed their natural environment (e.g. by constructing buildings and roads), wild species were forced to adapt to survive. Using each species' natural history clues, write down how they have adapted to living in a city. Imagine yourself as that species - what would you do to survive in a city? Is it healthy or unhealthy? Safe or unsafe? Are there any problems between people and wildlife because of these activities?

SPECIES	NATURAL HISTORY CLUES	URBAN ADAPTATION
 <p>Raccoon</p>	<p>I forage and hunt for a variety of natural food sources – fruits, berries, nuts, fish, frogs, eggs and more! I'm an omnivore which means I can eat lots of different types of foods. How do I find food in a city?</p>	
 <p>Eastern gray squirrel</p>	<p>I make a nest in a tree by gathering items found in nature, such as leaves and twigs and branches. I like my nest to be secure, safe and warm. Sometimes I nest in tree cavities. Where can I build my nest in a city?</p>	
 <p>Peregrine falcon</p>	<p>I raise my babies in places high in the sky – mostly on very tall cliffs (some are even 12,000 feet high!). Where can I raise my babies in a city?</p>	
 <p>Eastern coyote</p>	<p>I can travel many kilometres in a single day – through fields and forests to find new territory, a new mate or food. How do I move around a busy city?</p>	
 <p>Canada goose</p>	<p>I incubate (sit on) my clutch of eggs for about 30 days before they hatch. I like a nest where I can see far and wide – in high places or open fields, so that I can see predators approaching. I also like to be near water. Where can I nest in a city?</p>	

SPECIES	ACTIVITY ANSWERS AND FURTHER LEARNING FOR EDUCATORS:
Raccoon	While raccoons and other wild animals will forage for natural food sources, if an easy food supply is available they will take advantage of it. Trashcans, recycling bins, and organic food waste bins are frequented by this species. Much of the food people provide for wild animals (intentionally or unintentionally) does not meet their dietary needs; when wild animals fill up on human junk food (e.g. bread, crackers, chips, etc.) they are missing out on important nutrients that would be found in natural food sources. Wild animals breaking into areas where food/garbage is stored can also create conflict situations with humans. The head or limbs of wild animals can also become trapped in food containers. To keep wildlife safe and healthy, ensure to wash out all food containers and screw lids back on tightly. Ensure garbage, recycling and compost bins are tightly secured and report overflowing municipal garbage containers.
Eastern gray squirrel	Squirrels continue to make their nests in trees in cities; however, in some areas few trees exist. It is common for squirrels to find shelter elsewhere – such as in a home attic, shed or garage. This can create conflict between people and wildlife. Property owners will sometimes use a live trap to catch the squirrel and move her to a new location. However, if she is a mother, the babies will become orphaned when left behind. Visit www.torontowildlifecentre.com for more information on humanely evicting wild animals. To help create natural habitat, plant a tree! To keep wild animals out of homes and outbuildings, make sure that they are in good repair, and have any entry points fixed (before or after baby season). Squirrels have also been known to collect garbage for their nesting material which can be dangerous for them; to minimize the risk to wildlife, keep garbage and recycling bins secured; organize a garbage clean-up in your community!
Peregrine falcon	These magnificent birds of prey are common in cities and make their nests on the ledges of high-rise buildings. Unfortunately, many fledglings taking their first flight don't survive as they collide with windows of nearby buildings – a significant threat to all birds in urban settings. Volunteers from The Canadian Peregrine Foundation monitor the skies in Toronto each spring to assist fledglings that have made it to the ground, successfully or unsuccessfully. They also host live webcams of peregrine nest sites in the Greater Toronto Area - www.peregrine-foundation.ca . Advocating for buildings safer for birds is critical to helping birds of all species survive our growing urban environments. Reach out to your local representative to let them know you support a bird-safe city!
Eastern coyote	Coyotes use corridors in cities - both natural (like ravines) and human-made (like railways and roads) to get around. Although coyotes are very smart, roads can pose a problem and occasionally they are the victim of a car strike. People are sometimes nervous when a coyote is spotted in their neighbourhood, but this is actually a common situation! Coyotes are fearful of humans and should run away when approached. Making loud noises and appearing large by waving arms can also deter them from approaching. Coyotes should never be fed as it can make them more comfortable around people. There are many myths and misconceptions about this species, but they do not pose a risk to people; coyote attacks are extremely rare. People are more likely to become injured from lightning than from a coyote! For more information about coexisting with coyotes, watch Coyotes in the Urban Landscape, an e-module created by Coyote Watch Canada and the City of Toronto: www.toronto.ca/community-people/animals-pets/wildlife-in-the-city/coyotes/
Canada goose	Canada geese regularly nest on flat roofs, green roofs, and terraces of apartments and condominiums, usually near a water source. The height and open landscape of these locales make it easy for Canada geese to spot a predator. However, when babies hatch, they must walk to water within a couple of days – they are often trapped by a barrier around the perimeter or the drop is too high (e.g. 2 storeys or more). Schools are a type of building that often have a large flat roof – it's recommended to check the roof regularly for signs of nesting in the spring if geese are spotted flying to it. Goslings and their parents often require rescuing by TWC's Wildlife Rescue team. To learn more visit: www.torontowildlifecentre.com/wildlife-emergency-rescue-hotline/conflicts-with-wildlife/common-canada-geese-problems/geese-nesting-on-a-balcony-or-rooftop/