



Audubon

# ADVENTURES<sup>®</sup>



American Robin

## City Life for WILDLIFE



Mallard

**F**or thousands of years, wild animals have lived in forests, wetlands, grasslands, and deserts all over North America. For the last hundred years or so, we humans have changed much of the land to meet our own needs. Where we built streets and buildings, many animals could no longer find what they needed to survive. You won't find those animals in an urban (city) environment. But some animals are more adaptable. That means they can change their behavior to fit new conditions. We share our cities and towns with them today. Wild critters are all around in cities, especially in parks, schoolyards, and other "wild" spaces. They're flying overhead, perched on power lines, nesting on streetlights, hunting for prey in the bushes, *(continued on page 2)*



Eastern  
gray  
squirrel

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# City Life for WILDLIFE (continued from page 1)

and feasting on berries from shrubbery. Or they're taking care of their young in nests, underground burrows, and other protected places.

Birds are wild animals that people see every day in a city. Sure enough, they're just outside your door. You can hear the "chirp-chirp" of house sparrows darting about in the bushes and chasing after crumbs on the sidewalk. Pigeons coo on window ledges above while others look for food on the ground. Robins and crows are at home in cities too.

High up in the sky, soaring over houses and tall buildings, a peregrine falcon circles slowly. This bird has adapted to city living too. These magnificent hunters nest on building ledges and bridges. They dive after pigeons and other birds, snatching them from windowsills, streetlights, and even in mid-air. Red-tailed hawks and American kestrels also find plenty of prey and places to nest in cities. Other raptors pass

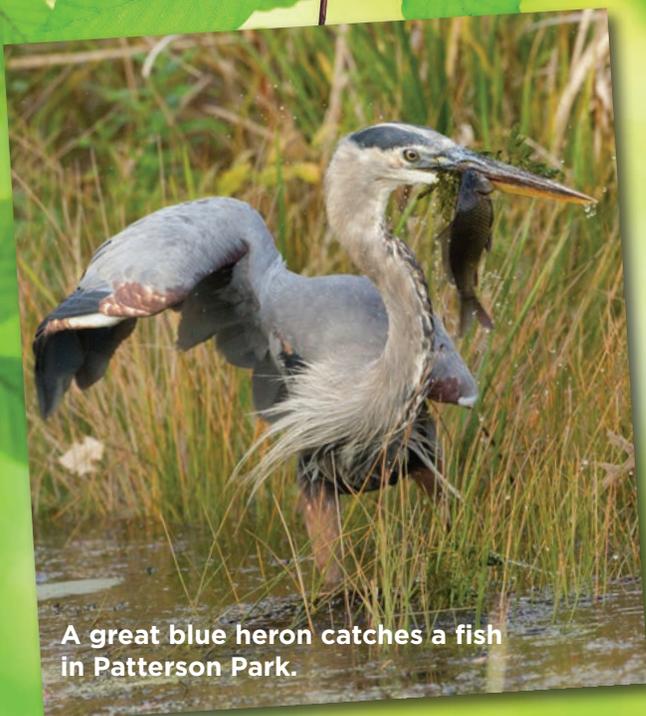


**Clockwise from top left: Great egret, peregrine falcon, wasp, red fox, red-eared slider**

through as they travel between the places they raise their young and the places they spend the winter months. That's called migration.

At a park or nature center, you can see the wild places where animals have lived for thousands of years. People come here to enjoy nature. Wild animals feel at home here. For them, a park is habitat. They can find everything they need to survive. There are places to hide, hunt, forage (look for food), nest, rest, get water, and raise their young.

If you could somehow magically see all the animals that are living in parks and nature centers, you'd be amazed at the numbers and variety of wildlife there: large and small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, birds of all kinds, and millions of the tiniest kinds of wildlife, from earthworms and ants to spiders, butterflies, and bees.



**A great blue heron catches a fish in Patterson Park.**

## Parks for All

**M**ost parts of a city are not great for wildlife, but a park is another story. A city park usually has many different kinds of animals and plants. That's because most parks have trees, shrubs, open spaces, ponds, rivers, or streams. That means creatures can find food, water, shelter, and space.

Patterson Park is in Baltimore, Maryland. The park has 55 acres of welcoming space for people and for wildlife. Surrounded by the bustling city, it provides habitat for thousands of birds. Some live there year-round. Some stop for a while during their migratory journeys. The Patterson Park Audubon Center has identified more than 200 species of birds. The birds use the park's lake, wetland, mature trees, and open spaces. Audubon's gardens in the park are also a source of seeds, berries, and insects for birds to eat.

This urban park is very popular with city people looking for recreation and natural beauty. It's also popular with plenty of city-dwelling wild creatures looking for a place to call home.



# Home Sweet Chimney

**C**himney swifts are small, fast-flying (swift!) birds found mainly in the eastern half of the United States. They once nested in hollow trees. But as towns replaced forests and houses replaced trees, the swifts could have been in big trouble. Fortunately, these adaptable birds found that chimneys and other structures were perfect for nesting.

Now, however, fewer and fewer modern homes have chimneys. So chimney swifts are losing nesting sites again. In Minnesota, for example, the population of swifts has dropped 50% since the 1970s.



Audubon Minnesota's Chimney Swift Conservation Project is tackling the problem. Eagle Scout Troop 100 in Minneapolis is helping. The Scouts built ten 12-foot-tall wooden nesting towers for chimney swifts to use. In the West, another species of swift, Vaux's swift, also benefits from human-made nesting towers.

Swifts migrate south for the winter. During the trip, thousands of swifts at a time often roost (spend the night) in the large chimneys of big buildings. It's an amazing sight to see.

Is there a bird species that needs help where you live? Audubon might have a project to help them. You can find your local Audubon Chapter or Center here: <http://www.audubon.org/audubon-near-you>.

# MAKING THEMSELVES AT HOME

**M**any common birds of cities and towns weren't here when the first Europeans arrived. Immigrants brought some of those birds with them, along with dogs, cats, pigs, and cows. Long ago, pigeons (officially "rock pigeons") nested in cliffs and caves. European colonists brought them here to use for food. But many escaped and found a good living around parks and buildings all over North America.



The house sparrow (once called the "English sparrow") was brought from England by early settlers. The settlers wanted to be able to enjoy this familiar bird in their new land. These sparrows now live all around the world, but only where there are houses, office buildings, and barns.

There are so many of these nonnative birds that they can cause a number of problems for other birds and for people. They compete with native birds for food and nesting sites. They damage crops, eat the feed of farm animals, and spread diseases.



**Y**ou can help to create wildlife-friendly habitat wherever you live. The actions and practices that protect and support birds and other wildlife also create healthier human communities, too. A backyard or schoolyard is a great place to start.



## 1. Water the birds.

Provide birdbaths and protect natural water sources. Be sure to replace the water regularly to prevent mosquitoes from moving in!

**2. Go native.** Plant native plants to give birds and other wildlife food, including fruit, seeds, and tasty bugs.

## 3. Keep kitty in.

Protect birds and other small animals, which can be killed by outdoor cats. Cats are safer inside, too.



**4. Skip the chemicals.** Keep wildlife, pets, and people healthy by lowering the use of poisons that kill bugs and weeds.

## 5. Let it be.

Leave dead trees and leaves, fallen branches, and brush piles to create nesting and hiding places for birds and other animals.



**6. Lights out.** Close your curtains or blinds and turn off unneeded lights at night so migrating birds don't get confused.

**7. Prevent window crashes.** Stop birds from hitting windows by putting up screens, closing drapes and blinds, or covering the outside of the glass with construction paper or other inexpensive, easily removable materials.

# Your Local Habitat: Check It Out

**P**arks, neighborhoods, even backyards are examples of places where some wild animals have adapted to city conditions. Take a walk around your yard, your neighborhood, or a park. Check off the features you see that can help wild critters survive. And check off the wild critters you see or are pretty sure live there.



Vincent Giarrano

## Food, Water, Space for Living

- Trees
- Shrubs, bushes, vines
- Grass (other than in lawns), flowers, ferns
- A source of fresh water
- Seeds, bird feeders
- Ponds, puddles, streams, birdbaths
- Any others? \_\_\_\_\_

## Neighborhood Critters

- |                                    |   |  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Birds     | <input type="checkbox"/> Deer               | <input type="checkbox"/> Insects, bugs     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mammals   | <input type="checkbox"/> Coyotes, foxes     | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiders           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Raccoons  | <input type="checkbox"/> Amphibians         | <input type="checkbox"/> Earthworms        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opossums  | <input type="checkbox"/> Frogs, toads       | <input type="checkbox"/> Any others? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skunks    | <input type="checkbox"/> Salamanders, newts | _____                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Squirrels | <input type="checkbox"/> Reptiles           | _____                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mice      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lizards            | _____                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chipmunks | <input type="checkbox"/> Turtles            | _____                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rabbits   | <input type="checkbox"/> Snakes             | _____                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bats      | <input type="checkbox"/> Fish               |  |

**What did you discover?**

Send an email to Audubon Adventures and tell us what you discovered in your neighborhood. Send your email to: [audubon\\_adventures@audubon.org](mailto:audubon_adventures@audubon.org)



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**We're correlated!** For correlations to the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and the Next Generation Science Standards, go to: [education.audubon.org/state-standards-alignments](http://education.audubon.org/state-standards-alignments)

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