

Let Nature Help You with Unwanted Animals

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On Jan. 29, King County Wastewater Division (WTD) hosted their third class on Zoom in their sustainable yard care series. The class titled Living with Wildlife gave many examples of how to deal with different unwanted wildlife.

This class was presented by Kristen Covey, and Monica Van der Vieren who work for WTD in Washington State. Sarah Rocero of Snohomish Conservation District, which partnered with WTD for these classes presented as well. Covey said the overall goal of this class is to “Work with nature, not against it.”

The class went over many different animals that can be a bother in yards, gardens, or homes: rats, coyotes, cutter bees, deer, moths, and rabbits. There were many different solutions for working with these different animals, such as letting nature help you, barriers, and lethal removal.

The idea behind letting nature help you, is for people to encourage wildlife that will help get rid of animals that are unwanted near or around your home.

One example was the raptor perch which is a tall perch for larger birds like owls and hawks. These larger birds often eat unwanted bugs, rats, and rabbits. This encourages larger birds to thrive, and discourages smaller animals from staying near your home.

Barriers were the most mentioned solution to bothersome animals. These are anything that can be used to keep wildlife from getting into unwanted areas. Barriers went hand in hand with consistency while Racero and Van der Vieren

were talking. In order for barriers to work, they have to consistently be checked up on, and maintained.

Last to be mentioned while discussing each individual animal, was lethal removal. This is because although sometimes it is necessary they wanted lethal removal to be looked at as a last resort. While speaking about Coyotes Van der Vieren said, “Culture shapes our view on wildlife” and explained how American author Mark Twain sparked fear and loathing of coyotes. This attitude supported ongoing mass hunting of coyotes, which caused rodent and rabbit populations to increase, causing damage to crops and gardens.

Although Coyotes are often seen as dangerous, Van der Vieren has simple tricks for dealing with coyotes: to yell at them to scare them away, or to keep her distance while they are in mating season. This is why they often recommend researching the animal before killing it, to understand whether the animal is dangerous or carries diseases. Van der Vieren summed up her opinion on lethal removal, “Although I prefer living with my neighborhood coyotes, I would consider lethal removal for sick, habituated, or unusually aggressive animals.”

This class can be found through Eventbrite or can be found and registered for on the King County WTD events page. This class was filmed in Washington State near Puget Sound and does focus on animals that are common in Puget, all presenters go over animals common to many other locations.

For those interested, the classes may not be held again next year, but previous classes can be found on the King County WTD YouTube page.



Deer in Kristen Covey's yard.
Photo courtesy of Kristen Covey