

October 26, 2011

The Association recently hosted a workshop to gather credible information to share with property owners who have concerns or problems with raccoons. Two NC Wildlife Game Wardens, five licensed Wildlife Damage Control Agents, and other professionals who service the Island attended. We hope you find the following information gathered at the workshop helpful. We have attached a condensed reference on NC Wildlife rules regarding eliminating raccoons.

### **Raccoons at Figure Eight**

Figure Eight Island's surrounding marshes, creeks, and uplands are the natural habitat for raccoons. These undeveloped areas offer raccoons ample shelter and are a prime source of their favorite foods, which includes fish, shellfish, small animals, birds and eggs, fruits, berries, and nuts. Raccoons are highly adaptable, mobile within their territories, and are excellent swimmers. When they venture into the developed areas of Figure Eight, they enjoy additional sources of food, fresh water, and shelter. The raccoon population in the natural areas around the Island is significant. With females producing two litters per year with two to five or more cubs per litter, it appears raccoons are here to stay.

Adventurous raccoons may create issues for the Island's human residents. Foraging raccoons, or those that want to nest inside houses, may become a major nuisance. Aside from any costly property damage a raccoon might cause, there are serious public health issues. Raccoons may carry canine distemper, parasites lethal to humans, and are the largest source of rabies in the wildlife populations.

### **What should Figure Eight Property Owners know about addressing issues with raccoons?**

- Property owners must first understand there are strict restrictions and laws that control raccoon trapping and disposal. Public health and legal risks associated with improper raccoon handling are high for the trapper, property owner, domestic animals, and the general public.
- Property owners must be aware that, by law, a permit is required to trap raccoons which then must be either released on the property owner's lot, or euthanized and disposed of only on the property owner's lot. They may not be transported off the property of capture, dead or alive. The only exception is that a Wildlife Officer or licensed Wildlife Damage Control Agent is permitted to remove the raccoon from the site for euthanization and disposal in the legally proscribed manner. A trapping license alone does not permit removal and disposal off-site.

### **What measures should Property Owners adopt to prevent issues?**

#### **Adopt Exclusion measures**

##### **- Deny access to domestic sources of food and water with sanitation practices.**

- Never leave bird seed, pet food, or standing water out in yards or decks. Even upper level decks are well within a raccoon's range.
- Never leave food outside - tossing fruits, vegetables, and other scraps to "break down naturally" actually attracts foraging raccoons to the property.
- Use raccoon-proof trash cans with lids that resist the animals' extremely dextrous paws. Provide sufficient trash cans to accommodate all household garbage. Do not leave bags or other containers of garbage outside of the trash cans, especially at night.
- Where possible, the trash receptacle enclosure should be raccoon proof.
- Raccoons are strong swimmers that shell and fish near piers, boats, and bulkheads. Do not leave fishing "scraps" out, as they will invite raccoons to your property.
- Never feed raccoons, as they will lose fear of humans and are likely to become habitual visitors at houses, foraging and outright seeking handouts.

##### **- Control sources of shelter.**

- Obtain a house inspection by a qualified builder or, better, a licensed Wildlife Damage Control Agent, to detect areas that invite entry, and areas already in use by raccoons.
- Carry out repairs and/or install materials to exclude entry as recommended.

## **What should Property owners do if raccoons move into their house or damage their property?**

### **Take Elimination Measures**

#### **- Trap and eliminate raccoons that have caused damage.**

It is highly recommended that property owners with raccoon damage or intrusion contract with a licensed professional to ensure lawful and safe procedures are employed to deal with the raccoon. Nesting areas in structures must be properly treated to reduce serious health risks to humans, and repairs should be carried out to eliminate future intrusion.

- Raccoons found in structures may legally be trapped and immediately released on the property, but by law may not be relocated or transported off the property owner's lot. Although within the law to release the raccoon on the property, it is not a good option because these raccoons are now conditioned to enter a dwelling for shelter. Simple exclusion measures are no longer effective for these raccoons, because they will continue to seek access at another area of the house or move on to a neighboring structure.
- A State Depredation Permit may be obtained to trap and euthanize a raccoon causing more than \$50 in property damage. The State Depredation Permit is not required for the landowner to trap and euthanize a raccoon in the act of causing more than \$50 in property damage. In both cases, the raccoon must be disposed of on the property of capture. Raccoons may also be eliminated by trapping in season with a trapping license. By law, these trapped raccoons must also be euthanized and disposed of on the property of capture. The only exception for removal from the property of capture is that a Wildlife Officer or licensed Wildlife Damage Control Agent is authorized to transport the animal for euthanization and disposal. The advantage in hiring a licensed Wildlife Damage Control Agent is that the euthanization and disposal may be carried out away from the residence.

**Raccoon elimination is subject to statute and rules best carried out by professionals. For more information, property owners should contact a professional pest control company or a licensed wildlife damage control agent. A fact sheet is attached which briefly describes taking of raccoons. Information on nuisance wildlife is available from the Wildlife Resources Commission website at [www.NCWildlife.org](http://www.NCWildlife.org) Visit the Association's website at [www.Figure8homeowners.com](http://www.Figure8homeowners.com) for additional information.**

## **Raccoon Elimination Fact Sheet**

This information is taken from the NC Wildlife Resource Commission Workbook for Wildlife Damage Control Agent certification.

- Raccoons are in the Order Carnivora, therefore, in North Carolina they cannot be relocated off the property of capture or kept in captivity. Rehabilitators are not authorized to handle or accept animals in the Order Carnivora.

### **Taking of raccoons with a State Depredation Permit:**

- Raccoons causing depredation may be taken with a State Depredation Permit.
  - The Wildlife Resource Commission's definition of depredation is when wildlife is causing significant damage of over \$50 to property or a realistic threat to life.
  - The State Depredation Permit must be filled out prior to any work commencing.
  - The presence of a raccoon in someone's yard or in the neighborhood is not justification to issue a State Depredation Permit.
  - Raccoons acting normally and preying on native prey species, or a raccoon attracted by individuals feeding animals outside, are not considered to be in the act of depredation.
  - Raccoons taken under a State Depredation Permit may be taken only by the method or methods specifically authorized by the permit.
  - Raccoons taken under a State Depredation Permit may not be relocated from the site of capture.
  - Raccoons euthanized under a State Depredation Permit must be disposed of on the property of capture. The only exception is that a licensed Wildlife Damage Control Agent, with the State Depredation Permit in possession, may relocate the raccoon for euthanasia and disposal.

### **Taking of raccoons without a State Depredation Permit:**

- The State Depredation Permit is not needed for non-lethal direct capture and removal of a raccoon from a structure when the animal is immediately released on the property and not transported or relocated from that property.
- Raccoons that are in the act of causing property damage of \$50 or more may be shot by the landowner (subject to local firearm law) without a State Depredation Permit. It is illegal for a landowner to wound the raccoon in a manner not causing immediate death. The raccoon may not be relocated from the property of capture, and must be disposed of on the property.

### **Trapping:**

- Raccoons may be trapped during regulated trapping season with a trapping license. Trapping, if authorized, must be in accordance with general statute and local laws. Trapped raccoons must be euthanized and disposed of on-site, no poisons or pesticides may be used, and intentional wounding is not allowed.

*The following licensed companies/individuals assisted the Association by providing information or participating in discussions about raccoons: Canady's Pest Control; Critter Control of Wilmington; Jimmy English Wildlife Removal; Integrated Pest Management; Lynn Hyatt, and NC Wildlife Officers.*