

Get Involved with Wildlife and the Outdoors

There is a lot to learn and appreciate about wildlife and the outdoors. With this in mind, take some time to explore nature and all it has to offer.

- **Read a book about wildlife and the outdoors.** Discuss the book with others and ask questions. Read it out loud to a child and experience the wide eyes of wonder and excitement as a tale of nature unfolds.
- **Take an earthy walk.** In other words, find a place to walk where soil is underfoot. Think about what soil contributes to the environment and the many forms of life it supports.
- **Become an expert on a particular mammal, bird or fish.** Read and study books on the species and share this insight with others.
- **Involve youth in outdoor activities.** Read a book about wildlife or go on a nature walk. Children and youth are especially curious and like to explore and get their hands dirty.
- **Take time to stop and look at the surroundings.** Even in the city, the sky, plants and wildlife are there to enjoy. Try to find plant and animal shapes in



- the clouds.
- **Join a group or organization that focuses on wildlife or the environment.** Find something that fits a particular interest and become an active participant.
- **Start a hobby watching, taking pictures or writing about wildlife.** Camping and canoeing also are fun ways to enjoy nature. Outdoor activities make special memories.
- **Plant something.** Sketch a plan for a backyard to incorporate different trees and shrubs, flowers or tall grasses that may attract wildlife.
- **Thank someone who has**

- done something for the well-being of wildlife and the environment.** This could be a farmer for implementing conservation practices or a neighbor for recycling.
- Celebrate wildlife and have fun with nature. Be creative and don't let anything hold you back.

Source: Ron Johnson, Ph.D., UNL wildlife specialist

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For resources and information on attracting wildlife, 4-H youth programs and more, visit <http://lancaster.unl.edu>

You Can Take Steps to Reduce Snakes in the Yard

Soni Cochran
UNL Extension Associate

Of all the types of wildlife people find undesirable, snakes are often times at the top of the list. In this area, the vast majority of encounters with snakes are between people and non-venomous snakes like garter snakes and bull snakes. Even then, few people are willing to accept these beneficial creatures in their yards and gardens.

During warm spring months, you are more likely to see snakes because they have come out of hibernation and are mating. If you can't handle the sight of snakes, there are a few things you can do to reduce their presence around your property.

- Keep your lawn mowed and clear of debris. Snakes need cover to hunt for food and protect themselves. If they don't have places to hide, they are less likely to be around. Don't leave wood or brush piles, keep window wells cleaned and remove items snakes might be able to hide under.
- Repair cracks along the foundation and fill holes around pipes.

Just because you see a snake on your property doesn't mean you have to kill it. You can avoid it or use the opportunity to learn about the snake by watching it. It is best to leave these beneficial animals where they are. Focus your efforts on excluding the snakes from any buildings and creating a habitat less inviting for snakes and their prey.



In this area, most snakes are non-venomous, like bull snakes (above) and garter snakes (below).



Lava Rock Barriers May Discourage Some Snakes

Some people report success with the use of lava rocks around buildings as a way to help discourage garter snakes. If you would like to try this method, your lava rock barrier must be at least two-feet wide and six-inches deep. Do not use any weed cloth or plastic under the rocks. You still need to remove any desirable habitat and repair cracks in foundations.

Do NOT Flush Medications

Barb Ogg
UNL Extension Educator

Historically, most experts have recommended flushing unwanted, unused or expired medications down the toilet. But, new research findings suggest this is not the best method of disposal. Instead, place them in the trash after taking precautions to prevent accidental ingestion by humans or animals.

Pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCP's) applied to the body or ingested have the potential to be excreted into sewage systems and ultimately, into wastewater effluent. When scientists have looked for PPCP's in the environment, these chemicals have been found.

A recent study of the water-quality of streams in the Boulder Creek Watershed, Colorado, found PPCP's in water samples. Trace amounts of these compounds have also been detected in surface water, drinking water and wastewater effluent sampling conducted in both Europe and the U.S.

A nationwide study by the United States Geological Survey detailed trace levels of PPCP chemicals found in prescription drugs in 80 percent of the waterways across the country. The breakthrough study checked for the presence of materials such as pharmaceuticals, antibiotics, sterols, hormones and other compounds. Seven streams and groundwater in Nebraska were included in the study. Wastewater treatment

plants have not been designed to remove PPCP's, but water professionals are actively researching technologies which will remove or break down these compounds.

Scientists are concerned some pharmaceuticals—endocrine disruptors—may adversely affect the reproductive system of the fish and aquatic organisms living in waterways. Evidence of the medications' potentially negative environmental effects has been documented around the country. Scientists have found fewer male fish than anticipated in streams, and male fish with female reproductive characteristics. Many scientists connect these findings to endocrine disrupting chemicals found in wastewater.

To help keep pharmaceuticals out of the environment, the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD) recommends the following simple steps.

1. Don't flush unneeded or expired medications down a toilet or drain. This includes septic systems as well as municipal wastewater systems.
2. Alter the medications in some way (e.g. mix with cat litter, coffee grounds, baking soda).
3. Remove all identifying information, close and secure the lid.
4. Dispose of the medication in the trash, preferably the day of pick up.

Sources: Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, U.S. Geological Survey, American Water Works Association, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Household Hazardous Waste Collections

Friday, June 22, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
Union College Parking Lot, 52 & Cooper Streets

Saturday, June 23, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
NE Wesleyan University, parking lot,
56 & Huntington Streets

Some items you can bring for disposal:

Thermometers, thermostats containing mercury, solvents, oil-based paint, paint thinner, pesticides, (even banned products like DDT), items containing PCB's (ballasts from fluorescent fixtures and capacitors from old appliances).

Do not bring latex paint, asbestos, tires, batteries, used oil, medicines, fertilizers, explosives and ammunition.

These collections are for household only; not for businesses. Only residents of Lincoln and Lancaster County can bring items to collections.

Still unsure what you have will be acceptable?
Call the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at
441-8040.