

Backyard Wildlife, Proper Respect, and Aid Help Environment and Woodland Health

It's hard to think of the big picture in regards to our backyard neighbors. Feeding birds and not feeding squirrels or chipmunks eliminates care of an important piece of the outdoor wildlife puzzle. As backyard caretakers, we should try to take into consideration all the wildlife.

In removing trees from property to make room for a lawn, animal pasture or outdoor buildings, we have had an effect on the original occupants.

This absence of trees and brush could encompass the entire food source of a squirrel, bunny or chipmunk in its territory. Moving to another territory for the unfortunate animal, is not an option. No animal in the adjoining territory will let the invading creature eat the food in their territory. So the ousted animal from your backyard will probably die of starvation or winter harsh elements.

Indigenous Squirrels (Red and Douglas) are of great significance in the restoration of the tree population. These small squirrels harvest the pine cones for their cache, at the same time the cache (stored food) are future trees planted by these little gardeners. Trees depend on these caretakers in exchange for the food source the trees give to the squirrels to stay alive.

In observing squirrels eat, they work very hard on a pinecone for relatively little food. Many pinecones are needed to sustain one squirrel. Loss of trees will mean loss of life. A positive thought for the property owners who choose to provide food for wildlife. Squirrels drop most of the food on the ground for smaller animals and birds to share.

Squirrels love vegetables, fruit and lettuce. Sharing this type of food is fine. However, it is perishable. Give small amounts so the squirrels will perceive this as a treat and eat it right away and will not try to store it.

It takes some skill to feed the backyard wildlife. Consider planning areas to feed birds and wildlife that will not interfere with the human lifestyle or pets that can fatally harm these small creatures. Consider a place that keeps food dry, as to not rot. Once food is out, remember to check and restock feeders.

Articles reprinted courtesy Debbie Marion, A Country Veterinary Clinic, Belfair, Washington