

Watch Out For Local Bandits

To each of us, our homes are safe havens; places where we escape from the hassles of the outside world and just relax. As a space we cherish, we want to make sure that it's protected, but you may be unaware of one particular local bandit that's been causing havoc for years: the raccoon.

Raccoons are pesky creatures, easily identified by the dark stripe across their faces and their ringed tails. These furry creatures may have cute faces, but the havoc they cause to your home won't inspire any warm feelings. They love to forage through gardens for food, eating your carefully planted vegetables and often their search for food leads them to knock over trash cans in order to get access to whatever leftovers may be in your garbage.

Not only are raccoons after our food, but they would seek to take over our space as well, looking to make our homes their own. They have been found dwelling in attics and chimneys causing varying amounts of property damage. Raccoons also like to hole up in ceilings, walls, ductwork and crawl spaces. They attempt to make dens in these spaces, where they birth and raise their young kits.

Some have evolved to stealing pet food, bird seed and any other resources left out in the open. The raccoon is a particularly fearless animal, willing to walk up to you and take food right out of your hands, regardless of whether or not you were offering it to them. Even this intrusion is nothing compared to the potential danger these creatures can pose because of the diseases they may carry. Sick raccoons can carry rabies, which can be transferred by bite through their saliva. These pose the greatest risk because the virus makes them more aggressive in their methods and their defense.

So how can we protect ourselves from such a foe? The key is to understand that raccoons are **nocturnal creatures**, meaning most of their mischief is done at night. Make sure to lock up your homes, especially after sunset. As **omnivores**, raccoons eat both veggies and meat without much preference and any discarded food items will catch their attention. They are **cunning** in their trade with natural talents to find food and adapt to whatever environment that food is in. Studies have shown they can get into virtually any locked space within 10 tries or less. Once they catch the scent of something they want, they can and will find any way to get it. Tearing through screen doors and digging holes that turn front lawns into mine fields are just two examples.

