

# PestGazette

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## Unwanted Houseguests

In many parts of the country, squirrels are the most common form of backyard wildlife and many people enjoy feeding squirrels to get a better look at the playful antics and acrobatic activities which make them a delight to watch. Unfortunately, just like other forms of wildlife, squirrels can cause damage to homes and can become pests in urban and suburban environments.

To make your home less hospitable to squirrels looking for a place to spend the winter, follow these tips:

- Squirrels only need a hole the size of a baseball to squeeze into a cavity. Perform a visual in-

spection of your home regularly. Repair water damaged, rotten or broken wood that may allow squirrels to enter attics.

- Keep rain gutters clear to avoid water damage to fascia boards. Water damaged wood is easy for squirrels to gnaw through.
- Keep attic vents screened. If there is a high level of squirrel activity in your neighborhood, you might consider heavy duty screens or hardware cloth to prevent squirrels from entering.
- Refrain from feeding squirrels close to the house. Protect backyard bird feeders with squirrel proof devices.

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*Our service area includes  
The 5 Boroughs of NYC  
& Long Island*

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## Raccoons 101

*Everything you ever wanted to know about raccoons*

Raccoons may appear to be cute but they can be serious pests, potentially causing damage and disease. Raccoons can weigh up to 35 pounds and prefer to live in wooded areas near water but have become very well adapted to living around people in urban and suburban environments. Raccoons are nocturnal creatures but are occasionally active during the day. Raccoons have a highly varied omnivorous diet which includes fruits, vegetables, insects, chickens, small mammals, fish and even pet food. You may notice damage to your lawn caused by raccoons digging it up in search of beetle grubs. The wide range of food consumed by raccoons has been an important factor in allowing them to thrive living amongst us. In order to deter raccoons, it is best to seal your garbage cans tightly, cap chimney



*Raccoons have become very well adapted to living near people in urban environments.*

# Invasive Species

What are they and how can you help prevent them?



gypsy moth



red fire ant



emerald ash borer

The term 'invasive species' refers to plants or animals that are currently living in a place in which they are not native. The presence of an invasive species is likely to cause harm to its new environment, economic damage or pose a health risk. Many times invasive species are ill-suited to their new environment and don't survive. However, some invasive species can flourish because their new environment may lack predators or other methods of population control to keep the new species in check. This allows them to out-compete our native species and can cause an unbalanced ecosystem or even localized extinctions!

You may have heard of some of the notorious invasive species in the United States like the gypsy moth, buckthorn, red imported fire ant and the emerald ash borer. Invasive species have become a very common occurrence in North America during the last 20 to 30 years. There has not been a single cause but the increase in interstate transportation and a global economy has accelerated the process. There has been a lot of effort focused on preventing invasive species but the task is so big that it is an ongoing struggle.



emerald ash borer (scale)

## How can you help prevent the spread of invasive species?

Sometimes there are simple ways to do your part! Camping and bonfires have a close association with a crisp fall evening. Most people do not harvest their own firewood, so they purchase it from stores, road-side vendors or other sources. While this seems to be a simple and harmless transaction, there may be unseen elements at play. Many invasive pest insect species are spread through the movement of firewood. Even seemingly healthy, sound wood can harbor invasive insects and their eggs. Unfortunately, insects (especially their eggs) can be extremely difficult to detect so even a thorough inspection of firewood may be inconclusive.

An infested log purchased in one area and moved to another can spread the invasive pest to a new place. You can imagine how humans moving insects can spread them to new areas much faster than they would be able to move on their own. There is nothing wrong with buying firewood but it is always recommended to purchase your firewood near where you plan to use it. This reduces the risk of spreading invasive pests which ultimately helps everyone. ■

## Raccoons 101 (continued from page 1)



flues and bring in all pet food containers at night. In urban settings, there are a lot of places for raccoons to thrive, make sure your house isn't one of them!

Pregnant females prefer to nest in a sheltered space like a backyard, garage, chimney, attic or underneath a deck. Raccoons carry fleas and ticks with them so a nesting population in your house can lead to secondary infestations of these blood-suckers. Mothers will usually have 1 litter a year containing 3-5 pups that are born in April or May. New mothers are very protective of their young and can cause significant harm protecting their litters. Raccoons are usually frightened of humans but have been known to attack (sometimes fatally) dogs and cats when they are cornered. If raccoons die

while inside a house there will be offensive odors and decaying carcasses will attract filth-breeding flies and other pests. It is recommended to leave trapping and relocation of raccoons to your pest management professional as public health concerns, property damage and strict guidelines for removal of wildlife make this a job you should not do yourself.

Call us today and we will assist you in eliminating your raccoon problem. Please keep in mind that if a raccoon appears to be aggressive and is showing abnormal behavior, such as appearing sick or disoriented, then there is a good possibility that the raccoon is rabid. In this case, the proper authorities should also be notified. If you are ever bitten by a raccoon, seek medical attention immediately. ■

# Preventing Overwintering Pests

**H**umans aren't the only ones who seek out a warm and inviting place during the winter. In fact, if you aren't careful, you might end up sharing your house with all kinds of insects (and maybe some animals too). As days get shorter and temperatures drop, many insects seek out shelter in a protected place and what could be better for a cold and weary bug than your house. If you aren't in the mood to host this winter, we recommend winterizing and pest-proofing your home. If you have experienced overwintering insect pests in years past, there is good reason to believe that you are at risk this year as well.

Preventing overwintering pests from entering your house is your best bet because once they have found their way inside, they can be hard to reach. These pests readily exploit wall voids, attics, drop ceilings and other hidden places. Preventative efforts should focus on finding and sealing exterior cracks, plugging weep holes and placing tight-fitting insect screens on foundation and attic vents. You also may need to check to see if your door sweeps or weather stripping on windows are properly fitted. Raking and removing leaves from around the perimeter of your house is a simple way to help reduce insect numbers. It's worthwhile to note that insects are often drawn to the south and west sides of houses which retain heat from the sun so it may be wise to focus extra attention on those places. It's important to begin this process in the early fall so you don't inadvertently seal in any insects that have already taken shelter inside your house.

Winterizing reduces pests during the winter and early spring and it may also reduce their numbers for the coming year. We can help provide a treatment this fall that will work with your winterizing efforts to reduce the number of pests that try to weasel their way in this winter. ■



## Which critters want to crash at your place for the winter?

There is a wide variety of creatures that would like to find their way into your house for the winter including raccoons, squirrels, lady beetles, elm leaf beetles, stink bugs, cluster flies, box elder bugs and even some wasp queens. Most of these pests are more nuisance than danger but raccoons and squirrels can cause significant problems that should be handled by a professional. Lady beetles can bite and have a defensive behavior in which they release a foul-smelling liquid than can stain fabric, so approach with caution. As spring draws near, these pests begin to 'wake up' from their winter nap and look for ways to get out of your house. It is common to see insects around windows during the day and lights at night. If you are finding some of these pests in your home we can help. ■







**QUEEN  
BEE**



**CLEVER  
COSTUME  
IDEA**

# THE CREEPY & THE CRAWLY

**H**alloween is associated with creepy-crawly things. For a creative costume, think about the world of bugs. Lady bugs, butterflies and caterpillars are classics, but with a little imagination you can think of all kinds of insect-related costumes. Consider 'The Queen Bee,' a combination of a honeybee and royalty. It could be as simple as a yellow and black striped outfit complete with wings, a crown and jewels. Another fun idea would be a lightning beetle (or firefly as they are sometimes called), a walking stick, a mosquito (vampire!) or an army ant. There are more species of insects than any other kind of animal so you can surely think up some fun and unique ideas that you won't see anyone else wearing!

Once Halloween is over and the candy has been eaten, take down the decorations and dispose of those pumpkins. Many insects are drawn to the odors given off by rotting fruits and vegetables so it is recommended that you don't leave your pumpkins around too long. Their decomposition can attract some unwanted pests like fruit flies, filth flies, cockroaches and squash lady beetles. It can become an escalating problem as other insects may come to prey on the pumpkin pests. ■



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