

# wildlife myths

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*Learn the truth behind the 10 most common misconceptions in the backyard.*

## **Rabbits abandon their babies.**

The female rabbit gives birth to helpless babies in a grassy nest called a form. She returns only twice a day to nurse the young, but she doesn't abandon them. She hides nearby to avoid attracting predators.



## **Bats are blind.**

This is just one of the many bat myths. It's simply not true. They have functional eyes and can see just fine. (No, they're not going to get caught in your hair!) Also, while bats do eat mosquitoes, they have a bigger impact on moth and beetle species.



## **Foxes eat cats.**

Many people fear for the safety of their pet cats. But think about it - the average weight of a red fox is only 12 to 15 pounds, less than many cats. Foxes feed on rodents, birds, insects and fruit. They pose little threat to cats.



### **Snakes are dangerous.**

There are few venomous snake species that might show up in the garden, but the vast majority of snakes are harmless to people and actually help control garden pests, from slugs to rabbits to voles. Even venomous snakes pose little threat as long as you don't try to handle them.



### **Birds will become dependent on feeders.**

Birds use feeders only to supplement natural foods, so they won't die if you forget to fill your feeders or go on vacation. That's why it's best to focus on feeding wildlife the natural way, with native plants that supply seeds, berries, nectar and nuts and that attract plenty of insects to eat.



### **Birdbaths produce mosquitoes.**

While it's possible for mosquitoes to breed in a birdbath, these insects require a minimum of five to seven days to complete their metamorphosis from aquatic larvae to winged adults. Empty your birdbath every three to four days, and it will never produce a mosquito.



**Deer have been left with no habitat.**

With all the deer in backyards, many people think that we've destroyed all their habitat. The opposite is true. Deer thrive in patchy woodlands and fields, and suburbia fits the bill perfectly, especially when our gardens provide a year-round buffet. There are more deer in many places today than there were before European colonization.



**Moles damage plants.**

Moles feed on invertebrates and might tunnel under your lawn in search of beetle grubs and worms, but they won't munch on your plants. Voles, on the other hand, are rodents that can cause plant damage.



**Touching baby birds will make parents reject them.**

Most birds really don't have a well-developed sense of smell. If you find a baby bird without feathers, try to find its nest and return it there, or call the Humane Society or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. They'll know what to do.



**Mosquitoes eat only blood.**

Only female mosquitoes feed on blood, and they do it only when they're ready to lay eggs and need an extra dose of protein. Otherwise, females feed on flower nectar, which is the only source of food for the males, and can even help in plant pollination.

