



WILDLIFE WATCH

Overview: Training Module 1



Learning objectives

- Understand the theory and structure of the Wildlife Watch program
- Understand the goals of the program
- Recognize the program's benefits to both people and wildlife
- Recognize the challenges of dealing with human-wildlife conflicts

Wildlife Watch Overview

Wildlife Watch is a comprehensive multi-agency endeavor to help reduce human-wildlife conflicts in California's urban environments. The program brings together city, county and state agencies as well as community groups and individuals with the common goal of becoming better stewards of our state's wildlife.

Overview (cont.)

The program is sponsored by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) but is ultimately run and maintained by a network of committed agencies, community groups and individuals who have completed the Wildlife Watch training. The goal is to empower local governments and community groups to take ownership of human-wildlife conflicts in their own neighborhoods.

Overview (cont.)

The Wildlife Watch program is modeled on the highly successful Neighborhood Watch program. In both, residents, with the help of volunteer coaches, take on the role of sentinels for their own communities, sharing information and solutions in a respectful and coordinated manner. It is a grass-roots approach, but requires support from local government agencies.

Overview (cont.)

Wildlife knows no boundaries. Wild animals will move where food, water and habitat are available. Therefore, a regional, multi-agency approach is critical for the success of Wildlife Watch.



Overview (cont.)

CDFW has developed a curriculum to educate local governments on all aspects of the program including wildlife laws, response plans, policy development, mitigation measures, conservation coaching and how to establish and support neighborhood Wildlife Watch programs.

Human-wildlife conflicts

Changes in our culture have led to an increase in human-wildlife conflicts. Respect for wildlife, particularly in urban areas, has dwindled over the years with youth becoming increasingly disconnected from nature. Today, wildlife officials are facing a war on public complacency and a lack of concern for our natural resources.

Conflicts (cont.)

Human-wildlife conflicts often create fear, frustration and anger in communities and between agencies that are unclear about each other's policies. With these incidents on the rise, CDFW and local government agencies frequently find themselves facing hostile audiences and frustrated citizens who are looking for solutions.

Conflicts (cont.)

The majority of urban wildlife conflicts are due to animals becoming habituated to humans and human sources of food. Too often we blame wildlife for causing the conflict when in reality the animal is simply responding to our behavior based on our actions, values and morals.



Conflicts (cont.)

The goals of Wildlife Watch are 1) to increase our appreciation of wildlife by developing respect and 2) to help individuals and communities take responsibility for their actions and change their behavior. By involving citizens as well as local government agencies, we increase our capacity to prevent and respond to wildlife incidents.

Conflicts (cont.)

In California agencies have the authority to take (kill) wildlife deemed a public safety threat. When wildlife is killed because it has lost fear of humans, we have failed as a society to be responsible stewards of our wildlife. It will take committed leadership at the government and community level to change our behavior.

Conflicts (cont.)

To become better stewards we first must agree that urban wildlife conflict is everyone's responsibility. We then must make the decision as stewards to take responsibility for it. Government agencies can't solve this problem alone. Support and participation of the public is needed for it to succeed.

