

INSIDE

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LISTINGS BEGIN ON PAGE G4



LIFE AT HOME

DECOR • DOMESTIC ARTS • RENOVATIONS • RENTALS • RESALE

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SQUIRRELS
GONE
WILDWho you gonna call?
The Wildlife Control HotlineLISA KADANE
CALGARY HERALD

When Esther Valerio saw a squirrel scamper across the sideboard in her Parkdale home, the 78-year-old nearly had a heart attack.

"It was scary," she recalls. "I like wildlife, but not in the house."

Frantic phone calls couldn't find a heavy willing to evict her unwanted tenant: pest control companies told her they didn't "do squirrels."

Finally, her daughter gave her the number for the Wildlife Control Hotline.

For ghouls rattling around the gables, everyone knows who you gonna call. For something a little less other-worldly — say, skunks under the sunroom or sparrows nesting in the soffit — no one knew who to phone for help until a year ago, when the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation, based northwest of Balzac, launched a hotline for homeowners dealing with wildlife intrusions.

Now on the receiving end of 50 to 75 calls a week, hotline director Ken Cheek has heard every kind of horror story imaginable involving close encounters of the bird kind. Forty adult pigeons, a dozen pigeon babies and 30 dead relatives wing-deep in bird poop in an attic? He's dealt with that, no sweat.

He's also no stranger to bats in bedrooms, skunk families denning

under porches, and wily raccoons breaking and entering for an easy meal. So when Cheek heard about Valerio's squirrel problem, he came to the senior's rescue.

He found a hole along an eave (left over from a recent renovation) and Valerio had her roofer patch it. He counselled her to buy or rent a trap to catch her unwanted guest (she bought a trap and caught two squirrels). Then, he installed screens over the vents outside her home to deter repeat offenders. Valerio's residence has been rodent-free for three months and counting.

"These kind of problems, nobody wants to deal with them," says Cheek, himself a certified urban wildlife control technician trained to handle such situations.

Many exterminators will trap or get rid of the critters for a fee, without taking preventative measures to ensure they don't return.

One client living near Fish



Lorraine Hjalte, Calgary Herald

Marigold, one of AIWC's "education ambassadors," is one skunk that Wildlife Control Hotline director Ken Cheek doesn't have to worry about.

Creek went through two exterminators and \$400 before she heard about the hotline. The pest control company trapped and removed the skunks, but didn't seal off the area under her front porch where they were denning. When one skunk was taken away, another would move in.

Cheek's team screened the entire porch with a galvanized wire mesh that was installed to a depth deep enough to prevent other area skunks from burrowing under again. They also put in a one-way door so any remaining animals could leave the den. (Humanely removing animals is part of their mandate.)

Though not-for-profit, the hotline charges a fee for its services, based on the scope of the project.

Expect to pay from \$300 to more than \$1,000 for complicated calls such as an attic full of pigeons. Proceeds go toward rehabilitation of injured and orphaned animals handled through AIWC.

Ultimately, "the problem isn't the animal, it's the shelter," says Cheek.

Permanently remove the roof over its head, and any food supply (for example, pet food or access to garbage), and your wildlife problem will resolve.

Call the Wildlife Control Hotline at 403-946-2361 for help with animal intrusions or injured or orphaned wildlife.

Says Cheek: "If you've got a question about wildlife, we are the people to call."

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Top tips for
keeping wildlife
out of your house
and yard

■ **GARBAGE:** Don't set out trash until the morning of collection or the night before, at the earliest. Make sure garbage can lids are secure/latched (avoid setting bare plastic bags out as animals — including magpies — can easily tear them to shreds).

■ **PETS:** Clean up after your dogs and cats (animal feces attract wildlife) and don't put feed bowls outdoors.

■ **DECKS:** If your deck is elevated off the ground, don't skirt it with plywood (this makes a cosy, dark den for skunks or raccoons). Instead, use lattice or mesh; something that lets in light.

■ **FLORA:** Clean up fruits and berries that fall from trees or bushes in your yard. This rotting food source attracts unwelcome critters.

■ **ROOF:** Periodically check your roof to make sure it's in good repair. Raccoons and squirrels will sniff out rotting wood under shingles and pull them off to chew the wood. If they chew through and get in, they can wreak havoc.

—Tips courtesy Ken Cheek, Wildlife Control Hotline

AROUND THE
HOUSE

Hang it up

ORGANIZING • Freshen up for fall with these clutter busters: ■ **FRAMES** Thanks to the power of magnetism, these Magnique boards and picture frames will organize any room, providing space to display and easily change photos and calendars.

The boards are leather or suede magnetic, surrounded by a wood frame.



Simply place pictures, accessories and other important papers on the board and hold them in place with stylish, Italian glass magnets.

The frames have two hooks for hanging; or, a smaller Magnique "picture frame" comes with an easel back if you want to put it on a desk or shelf.

Magnique boards are hand-made in Canada and available in dozens of sizes and styles. Available at magnique.com, prices range from \$28 to \$300.

■ **NAILS** When hanging a picture, most of us are faced with the same dilemma: to use a wall anchor that makes a large hole in the wall, or to opt for a plain nail and risk the picture falling or the nail pulling out and damaging the wall.

Many give up hanging a picture in just the right place because there isn't a supporting stud behind the dry-wall.

Deco Nails offer a safe alternative and you won't have to find a stud.

The nails are available in two head sizes and a nail head ensures the picture won't fall down. Each nail supports nine kilograms — perfect for hanging pictures, mirrors or heavy clocks.

Available at Home Depot and Home Hardware locations. Price: \$3.99 (set of 6) or \$7.49 (set of 12). Go to hangandlevel.com.

■ **TOOL KIT** Stanley's 684-piece Household Kit is a handy answer to all of your picture-hanging problems. Add this compact plastic case to your house and you'll always know where to find the right nail or screw.

The kit contains everything for hanging pictures, shelves or posters. It includes nails, thumb-tacks and push-pins, anchors and screws, picture wire, hooks and sawtooth hangers — all neatly packed into sections of the tray.



Available at Rona and Canadian Tire for \$12.97. Go to stanleyhardware.com.

—Randy Ray, Canwest News Service

Photo Illustration, Rachel Niebergal, Calgary Herald

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Wildwood, \$625,000 142 Wedgewood Drive, SW
Handy-man special! Discover tremendous value & exceptional opportunity to renovate with this home boasting an astounding 2453 SF with 5 bedrooms in sought-after Wildwood. Premium location on a quiet, tree-lined street. Huge potential!



Signal Hill, \$799,000 101 Sienna Park Gardens, SW
Stunning 5 bedroom home offering over 2600 SF plus developed walkout sitting atop Sienna Hill with sweeping views! Vaulted living room with 2-sided fireplace. Master suite boasts views, huge walk-in closet with jet-tub ensuite.



Bridgeland, \$799,000 228 - 6A Street NE
Large home on a 44-ft lot, in an excellent location facing onto a park with wonderful city views from both levels. 3040 SF + developed basement, 5 bedrooms upstairs, renovated kitchen & baths, granite counters, steam shower, jetted tub.



Signal Hill, \$875,000 102 Sienna Ridge Landing, SW
Incredible mountain views, backing & siding a park, sitting atop the ridge in desirable Sienna Hill. 2356 + 1035 s.f., 3+1 bedrooms, 3.5 baths w/ dev'd walkout. Hardwood floors, comfortable master w/ sitting area & jet-tub ens, lrg deck w/ hot tub.



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