

Urban Wildlife

You don't have to live out in the countryside to be surrounded by wildlife. Here's a handy checklist of a few common varieties of animals found inside the boundaries of Kansas City.

BIRDS

Kansas City is on the migration route for dozens of species of migrating birds. Insect eaters like Scarlet Tanagers, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Northern Orioles and Ovenbirds spend summers in the Mid-west, raising their young. When the cold weather arrives and insects are scarce, they make the long trip to Mexico and Central America where they spend the winter.



Geese are reverse migrants. They spend the summer in the north and winter in the Midwest. Thousands of them congregate on local ponds; in fact, some have become permanent, full-time residents.

MAMMALS

Many varieties of Missouri mammals have adapted to living in close proximity to humans. Deer love the grass on golf courses and spend the night in the wooded areas bordering the greens. Opossums and raccoons sniff around our houses and garages, looking for dog food and scraps. Rabbits find shelter and food in our gardens; you can often spot their nests under tall plants. Squirrels scamper up and down trees and use telephone wires as super highways. Foxes have been spotted sitting in driveways, checking out the vicinity. After dusk, you can watch the bats flitting through your garden, eating half their weight in bugs every evening.



REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Cold-blooded creatures, like reptiles and amphibians, hibernate during the winter. With the arrival of spring, they emerge and begin foraging for food. You might spot a box turtle sunning herself between the rows of tomatoes in your vegetable garden. Garter Snakes and Black Rat Snakes help keep the rodent population under control. One of the first frogs to emerge in the spring is the Green Tree Frog. During early evening hours, you'll hear their song. These chameleons of the amphibian world are able to change their skin colors to match their environment; sometimes they are dark green, sometimes light green and sometimes they are brown.



INSECTS AND WORMS

If you have a water feature in your backyard, whether it's a large pond or just a large pot with a few plants, you are sure to see Dragonflies winging over the surface. Spiders spin webs between the branches of rosebushes and butterflies sip nectar from sweet-smelling flowers. The huge bug stalking through the grass is a Praying Mantis. Moths (like the Cecropia at left) are active at night and occupy the same niche as butterflies. Katydid's fill the night air with their song - "Katy-did, katy-did-it".



GO OUTSIDE

Step outside your door and revel in the wildlife all around you. Sit outside in the evening and check out the bats and moths. Get up early in the morning and you might see an opossum trundling home for a well-deserved nap. Enjoy the urban wildlife right here in Kansas City.