





with great care. Leave at least a 30-foot wide undisturbed strip next to the water to provide space for wildlife and to protect the water from other activities in your woods. Don't risk spoiling a major wildlife attraction.

The absence of open water in your woods does not mean it will not attract wildlife. Animals meet their water needs in various ways. Some get all they need from the foods they eat, and others drink dew or raindrops that cling to plants.

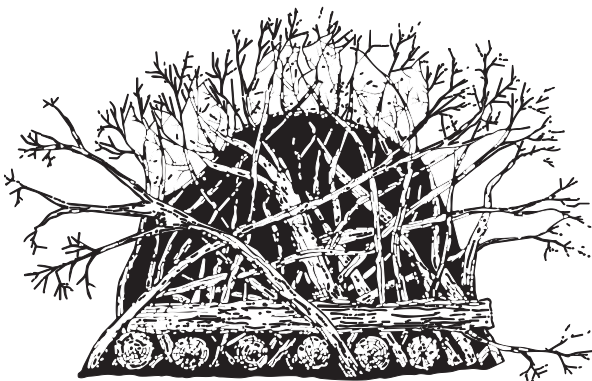
Sometimes wildlife will create wet habitat. Beavers are famous for their ability to dam streams. The ponds they create are bonanzas for other water-loving wildlife as well. If there are no beavers in your backyard woods don't despair. In some circumstances it may be feasible for you to create a pond. Seek help from local conservation agencies. They can help determine if your woods is suited for a pond, and may even be able to cover some of the project costs.

### Shelter—the creature comforts

Shelter is critical to wildlife. It offers protection from the elements, safety from predators, a place to raise young, or simply a resting place. Fortunately, wildlife requires minimal accommodations, such as a leaf, fallen log, or hole in the ground.

The clean look you may enjoy in your lawn is not well suited to your backyard woods and the wildlife found there. Piles of brush or rocks are wonderful hiding spots for squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, snakes, and other small animals. Next time you are cutting brush or pruning trees, consider piling the cut branches in your woods. Be careful not to overdo the cutting; however, wildlife need plenty of living shrubs and other vegetation. Caution: Brush piles should be created only outside the fire safety zone

### Brush Pile



Brush piles are easy to construct, and they provide homes for small animals.

around structures. The zone should be at least 30 feet wide on level or gently sloping ground and 100 feet or more on slope grades 30 percent or greater down hill from any structure. (See the Backyard Woods Tip Sheet on Protect Your Property From Wildfire for more information.)

Planting shade-tolerant (able to survive in partial shade) needleleaf trees within an otherwise broadleaf woods will increase its appeal to wildlife. Needleleaf trees, especially those in dense clumps with branches near the ground, give all-season protection.

Vibrant, healthy trees are the dominant feature in most woods and are certainly important to wildlife. Dead and dying trees—whether standing, leaning, or fallen—also play a vital role. Trees weakened by age, disease, or injuries attract insects, which in turn attract insect-eating animals. Through decay and the work of woodpeckers and other wildlife excavators, cavities eventually appear in many dead and dying trees. You want an abundant supply of cavities in your backyard woods. Scores of birds and mammals from wrens to raccoons take shelter in such cavities. Birdhouses and other types of nest boxes are another popular and effective way to add cavities. You can buy or build a variety of sizes and shapes aimed at accommodating various species; however, don't be discouraged if nest boxes attract unintended occupants!



A den tree is home to different animals at different times.

Once dead and dying trees fall, other wildlife, such as rabbits, toads, and worms take advantage of their shelter. You and the wildlife don't have to wait for trees to die. Girdling—removing bark from a 3-to 5-inch ring completely around the tree—will hasten its demise. Start

slow and monitor the results before girdling too many trees in your woods. Seek the advice of an arborist or consulting forester before girdling a tree. Some trees are better to girdle than others.

### Space—in three dimensions

You probably know the number of acres your woods covers, but that only includes two dimensions. The space available for attracting wildlife is much greater. Like a high-rise hotel your woods extends vertically from the roots and soil to the treetops. Adding rooms to your wildlife hotel may be easier than you think. Vegetation of varying heights is what provides a full range of suites.

