Urban

Physical Description

According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010, more than 80 percent of the American population lived in or near an urban area. The Census Bureau defines an urban area as a large central place with a total population of at least 50,000. In addition to a large human population, urban areas are characterized by residential and commercial development connected and crisscrossed by infrastructure, such as roads, train tracks, and utilities. Areas such as neighborhood parks offer the best possibility for wildlife habitat within an urban environment.

Dominant vegetation

It is not possible to identify dominant vegetation common in urban areas because urban areas are found in all ecoregions of the U.S. However, urban ecoregions typically contain gravel and paved areas, annual plantings, perennial grasses and forbs, shrubs, and young and mature trees. The vegetation is as likely to be an introduced species as a native species. Additionally, vegetated areas are typically manipulated in a landscaped manner versus "letting nature take over" as in rural areas. Interspersion is an important concept to understand in urban areas because of the fragmented landscape from residential and commercial development.

Urban areas are often dominated by non-native, invasive vegetation because of the disturbed and fragmented landscape and because many varieties of nonnative ornamentals are planted for aesthetic purposes. Educating the public about native versus nonnative cultivars and monitoring should be implemented in all urban areas.

Wildlife associated with Urban areas

American robin
bluebird[1]
common nighthawk
European starling
house finch
house sparrow
house wren
northern flicker
peregrine falcon
rock pigeon
ruby-throated hummingbird
song sparrow
big brown bat
cottontail[2]
coyote
eastern gray squirrel
raccoon
white-tailed deer

[1]bluebird: may include eastern, mountain, or western
[2]cottontail: may include desert, eastern, or mountain

Considerations for Urban Wildlife management practices

Attracting wildlife for viewing is popular among people in urban and suburban areas. However, many wildlife species can quickly become a nuisance, especially when they find protective shelter in unintended areas (under houses, in attics) or begin to damage property (chewing/drilling holes in wooden siding, defecating on property). Care must be exercised when attracting wildlife in urban and suburban areas, especially when using artificial feeders, which can also attract unwanted species, such as mice and rats, and make desirable species more susceptible to unnatural predators (house cats). If you care about small wildlife, keep your cat indoors!

Although there are several active management practices that can be implemented, such as artificial feeders, mowing, planting flowers, and rooftop/balcony gardens, there are also some common-sense considerations that should always be given. For example, when nests of desirable species are found, care should be taken not to disturb them.

NOTE: Urban areas vary considerably in the amount of open space available, number of buildings, population density, etc. Thus, there are several wildlife management practices that are applicable in some urban or suburban areas and not in others. Some WMPs, such as those related to livestock and row crops, are not considered applicable for Urban ecoregion. Forages, such as clovers, may be sown in open areas to attract species such as cottontails and white-tailed deer, but grain plots are not applicable.

Dwayne Elmore

Wildlife damage management is an important consideration in urban areas as wildlife frequently conflict with people. Here, netting is preventing gulls from roosting on houses.

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Urban areas provide habitat for some wildlife species. The presence of wildlife is considered beneficial to many people.