

What Should You Do if You Encounter a Wild Animal?

In our Featured Article, we described the recent discovery of a den of foxes under the entrance to Building 30 on the Bethesda campus. While these types of encounters with wildlife are not very common, they do happen at least a few times every year. This raises the question: what should you do if you are the person who encounters the wild animal? All wild animals should be avoided; you should never approach them. It is fairly common to see deer, geese, foxes and many other animals on an NIH campus. These animal sightings require no action if the animal appears healthy. However, if the animal appears injured or distressed, or if it is a juvenile animal, you can report it to have the situation investigated by a professional.



There are processes for reporting an injured or distressed animal on several other NIH campuses. Staff on the Research Triangle Park campus in North Carolina are instructed to call security at 984-287-4500. Most other campuses can find assistance by calling their operator or security.

If you encounter wildlife on the Bethesda or Poolesville campus, you should contact the Wildlife Veterinary Volunteers by calling the NIH non-emergency line at 301-496-5685. Please be sure to include

your name, a call-back number and the location where the animal was seen. The on-call veterinarian may contact you about your report, especially if the animal has moved. The Wildlife Veterinary Volunteers group consists of veterinarians from many ICs. They always have a veterinarian on-call to deal with any situations that may arise. They have also received training for dealing with wild animals, including a few members trained in safe tranquilization, if needed. This group is the go-to source for everything involving wild animals on the Bethesda campus!



Please note that encounters with pest species should be treated differently than encounters with wildlife. If you

are having issues with insects, mice or other pest species on the Bethesda or Poolesville campus, these should be reported to the [Integrated Pest Management Program](#) by calling 301-496-4294.

If you encounter a wild animal that needs help while off campus, your best option is to contact your state's Department of Natural Resources. For example, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources

lists [licensed Wildlife Rehabilitators by county](#). Similar programs are available through other states and Washington D.C.