

Video	Audio
	>> <b>Male Narrator: From chipmunks to coyotes, from blue jays to turkeys, many different forms of wildlife make their home in the cities and towns of Georgia, coming up next on Georgia Outdoors.</b>
	>> <b>Male Narrator: From the perches of a backyard birdfeeder to the barstools of the local watering hole, Georgia's cities and suburbs are home to many forms of urban wildlife. Perhaps the most abundant class of animal found in our cities is birds. In one leafy Atlanta neighborhood there can be seen dozens of feathered friends. Resident John Rozier describes a typical block party.</b>
	>>Rozier: We have little Carolina wrens, we have old blue jays, we have the Georgia state bird, the brown thrasher. And I'm not too fond of them, they eat our figs. Well, within the last several years we've acquired some new residents on our street. My wife and I have lived here 45 years, but we never expected to have wild turkeys show up, but here they are.
	>>Cotton-Smith: .there's a whole like turkey lore in the neighborhood, you know...they've been here for 20 years or they just came here 10 years ago, but they've been here as long as I've lived here.
	>>Tozer: a neighbor kept them in a small farm  >>Rozier: right up from the railroad tracks two or three blocks from us.  >>Tozer: I heard they got away and he tried to gather them up but didn't get all of them.
	>>Rozier: We don't know that but we think that's where they came from.  >>Tozer: when they first came out, there were crowds of them, like a dozen, in people's yards just up and down the street.
	>> <b>Narrator: At the turn of the century turkeys were having a hard time. Suitable land was disappearing. Capture and relocation programs have brought this bird back from the brink; and while habitat loss is still significant, the birds are obviously adapting to changing times.</b>
	>>Ozier: As long as there are not too many dogs or kids with slingshots and BB guns chasing them. They may continue to do all right.
	>>Rozier: we are very concerned about their safety.
	>>Tozer: We have a lot of jokes in our neighborhood about...you know...what are you serving for thanksgiving dinner...
	>> <b>Narrator: Turkeys are the largest game bird in North America. They have between 5,000 and 6,000</b>

	<b>feathers, which keep them warm and dry, allow them to fly, and... to show off for the opposite sex. There are two major characteristics, which distinguish males from females: spurs and beards.</b>
	>>Thackston: But the factor that's most consistently distinguishable uhh to tell hens from gobblers is the head. The gobbler has a very bulbus head in the spring when he's fired up for for mating it'll be red white and blue so he's truly an american bird.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: So American, in fact, that Benjamin Franklin, proposed the turkey as the national symbol of the fledgling United States. He was dismayed when the bald eagle was chosen saying, "The turkey is a much more respectable bird, and withal a true original native of America."</b>
	>>Cotton-Smith: It's amazing that they have survived because this is a very busy...there are speed bumps on the road...a very busy city neighborhood. And you will see them walking along the main road there...just bustling along with many lanes of traffic. it's extra-ordinary.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: Some other critters that are famous for their urban know-how are... squirrels. Well, maybe not this one. But gray squirrels epitomize urban wildlife and they are probably the most frequently seen wild mammals in Georgia. In fact, life is so good in the city that there are more squirrels here than in the forest. You can see them scampering just about everywhere... on fences... in trees... on birdfeeders... and perhaps most frequently ...in public parks where scraps and handouts are numerous.</b>
	<b>Dogs are also everyday park visitors and are usually welcome—they are mans' best friend after all. But another member of the dog family is not so welcome and is probably a more frequent visitor to urban and suburban areas than anyone might think—the coyote.</b>
	>>Waters: People think that you know, because they might live in a suburban area, that they are not supposed to be here. Fact is, that coyotes are virtually state wide and there is a healthy population of them and they are here to stay.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: Coyotes can and will live virtually anywhere. They thrive in suburban areas, dining on garbage and rodents such as moles and chipmunks.</b>
	>>Waters: And a lot of times, especially in subdivisions, gutter down spouts are attached to a black plastic pipe that runs under ground and drains somewhere else. That is a good place for rodents to hide and coyotes have a keen hearing

	<p>and they hear little rodents running in those pipes and it is not uncommon for them to dig them up. simple solution to that is, put a piece over wire on the end of it. You won't the coyote digging up your yard. Or the neighbor's dog for that matter.</p>
	<p><b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: Coyotes appear more threatening than they actually are. Their long legs, and bushy tail can be menacing. But in reality, coyotes weigh a mere 25 to 35 pounds and they are probably more afraid of you than you are of them. Although your cat may want to proceed with some legitimate trepidation. Because coyotes can and do target household pets as prey, they are considered a nuisance or pest species. But few species are as reviled as the beaver.</b></p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Dudeck: Beavers in urban environments are always seen as nuisance wildlife when this actually is not the case. Beavers damming is actually extremely beneficial because the flooding causes wetlands to occur and honestly over half the endangered species in the world have spent at least some part of their life in a wetland environment. And this is also good for purification of rivers and streams going through wetland environments...and they don't realize the actual benefit of having beavers around.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Narrator: No other animal affects their environment as much as the beaver—except, of course, for humans. Building is in a beaver's blood and they do it constantly during their waking hours—which is to say, mostly at night, although they can be active during the day depending on the weather. These beavers live along the Chattahoochee River in Roswell. Their lodge is typical as it is a round structure made of branches and mud. When danger threatens, a beaver will slap the surface of the water with its tail, producing a loud sound that serves to warn other beavers. The ponds that back up behind a beaver dam is really good habitat for many different species of wildlife including fish, turtles, egrets, and ...geese.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Waters: Canada Geese are a migratory species, the geese, most of the geese we have problems with in Georgia are resident geese. The Canada Goose population had declined to the point of needing some help back you know, 30 years ago, and so our agency embarked on Canada Goose restocking program and it worked. And we have plenty of geese.</p>
	<p><b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: Canada Geese are one of the most commonly seen animals in the suburbs. These geese live just upstream from the beaver lodge on</b></p>

	<b>the Chattahoochee River. They come here because the know where to get food.</b>
	>>Waters: Well, in the old saying in one man's trash is another man's treasure, is, is, is true with geese. Uh you know most of our parks along our lakes or access points along the river, or anywhere that geese and people come into contact on any scale, that's where we end up with most of the critical goose complaints and a lot is caused by, by people. By people feeding them, making pets out of them if you will. But the person that's trying to picnic and doesn't want to be mugged by a goose or doesn't want to step in goose mess, uh that's a problem for them,
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: And when it comes to finding a free meal, raccoons are some of the best foragers around. These bandits are equally at home in forested, rural, and suburban areas. While most feeding of raccoons is unintentional that is not the case when it comes to birds. Humans spend more than 170 million dollars a year on bird feed.</b>
	>>Ozier: Well, a lot of kind of birds can be seen in these urban and suburban areas in fact often people who put out feeders, will often find just as good of a variety as you would see anywhere, particularly during migration. Atlanta has a lot of trees in it, it is a good example of a city that does a pretty well for attracting birds. But a lot of resident birds are in the cities too and I often hear of barn owls, screech owls, pileated woodpeckers, uh some of these others that are nesting right in people's yards they put up boxes for them. And of course robins do quite well, blue birds, crows even are moving in to some of these areas. So people with a little bit of diverse habitat in these suburban areas can do pretty well in attracting quite a few birds. But a small yard can do a lot for attracting wildlife. You've got a good variety of native vegetation planted, in particular some shrubs and some over canopy of trees provides a lot of food and shelter and nesting places, and that can attract a lot of birds and other wildlife. Some of them don't need a very large territory, so just a few yards together in a subdivision might be enough to attract a pretty good population of some of these birds.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: Mockingbirds can be seen in almost every suburban neighborhood and on every city block. While they are not very picky about their nesting location they are aggressive about defending those nests. They've been known to chase away crows and hawks and even dive bomb dogs.</b>
	>>Collins: Just I think if you uhh provide a backyard habitat for birds and butterflies and other wildlife uhh not only are you doing a service to the wildlife but you are increasing your enjoyment of the natural world hundred fold. So not only are you doing it for a good reason but you're doing it because it makes you have fun too. So, I would say uhh don't do it just for you or just for the birds but for but for both because its sort of umm a great thing to do.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: Of course if the perfect backyard habitat is not to be had...some birds will seek out</b>

	<b>alternatives, like these house sparrows.</b>
	>>Shields: I've tried many things to try and rid the sparrows of the patio, um, I even bought an owl at the ace hardware that someone said, 'oh if you get an owl and you put it up there the birds will be scared of the owl' Well that lasted a couple of days, I even tried moving the owl around a couple of different places and that didn't work.
	>> <b>Narrator: House Sparrows are notoriously ingenious nesters. They are the most abundant songbirds in America and the most widely distributed bird in the world. But this persistence has increased competition for nesting sites causing the decline of some native bird species such as the bluebird.</b>
	>>Ozier: The house sparrows are seemingly very well adapted to the living in the cities, in fact they seem to actually prefer living in the cities. They can find plenty of food to eat. A lot of it is just food scraps that people have left around and they like nesting in structures. So you have got plenty of buildings and bridges and things around for them to nest in. And so they do quite well, and probably the predation rate is a little bit less in these cities. Again, you might have an occasional hawk passing through some of these areas, or a stray cats might be a problem in some areas, but mostly these birds are taking advantage of a situation and doing quite well.
	>> <b>Narrator: It's a marvel how bird species can adapt to urban environments. The European Starling was introduced when 100 birds were released in New York City's Central Park. Starlings can now be found throughout the united states. This starling pair has found a unique nesting site—a dramatic example of just how adaptive these birds can be. But the prince of the urban bird kingdom, or some may say the jester, is the Rock Dove.</b>
	>>Armstrong: A lot of people don't realize that Pigeons and Doves are essentially the same.
	>> <b>Narrator: Jim Armstrong is an Associate Professor of wildlife biology at Auburn University... and he's a pigeon fancier.</b>
	>>Armstrong: A Fancier is someone that breeds pigeons, primarily for show. Now a lot of people still think its crazy, but you know, I, I have given up on trying to justify it. I don't know, its almost like, I think there may be a genetic tendency in people, you either have it or you don't.
	>> <b>Narrator: Jim also deals with nuisance animals</b>

	<b>and sometimes he gets calls about his favorite bird, the pigeon. But the pigeons that you see down downtown are different from the pigeons Jim keeps.</b>
	>>Armstrong: The one that most people associate with, uh downtown, in large cities is the feral pigeon, sometimes called Rock Dove. They are the ones that unfortunately create some problems for people because the pigeon is a fairly large bird by wild bird standards and they are gregarious in nature so when you put 400-500 feral pigeons roosting together, it causes a problem. If pigeons were solitary, their image would probably be a lot better.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: All pigeons, both the feral urban pigeon and the cultivated pigeons, are monogamous and lay two eggs. Pigeons feed their young in a unique manner, they secrete a substance known as "pigeon milk". Jim finds working in the pigeon loft amongst the cooing to be peaceful part of the day.</b>
	>>Armstrong: It's probably some of the most relaxing time, I have always wondered that if you measure people's blood pressure, I bet pigeon breeders' blood pressure is the lowest when they are in the loft, even when they are cleaning the loft or doing things that may not be all that much fun. It's still just a really relaxing time.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: With the large numbers of pigeons living in our urban cities one wouldn't suspect that there was a rapacious predator soaring above... and for many years there wasn't.</b>
	>>Waters: Their natural place to nest is on cliffs, and what better nesting habitat than the skyscrapers in downtown Atlanta.
	>>Ozier: these sky scrapers to a falcon look juts like a rock cliff, cause they find nice suitable ledges where they can place their nest, and there's plenty of pigeons and other birds in these cities, and so the peregrine falcons do quite well.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: Peregrines are the fastest animal species on the planet. They can reach speed of over 200 miles per hour. The decline of the peregrine falcon is attributed to the use of pesticides such as DDT. Thanks to the banning of DDT in 1972, and the efforts of biologists, these birds of prey have been given a second chance.</b>
	>>Ozier: Peregrines that live in cities, they are hunting right there in the city areas and in some of the parks and we get reports from people all around town people see them outside their office window, swooping down and to chase a bird or maybe chasing though the park, you know, Piedmont Park, some of these areas, so they are covering a lot of ground, and you know, peregrines catches all their food in the air so they really don't need any perches or anything

	like that. They use the building for their feeding post and their lookouts and all.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: Another species that is back from the brink of extinction, but that is now showing up in our cities, is the American alligator. In the 1960s alligator population was very low. Hunting was prohibited and their population has rebounded—rebounded so much in fact that a limited harvest is again allowable.</b>
	>>Waters: Alligators like most other wildlife species, they will disperse and, and move and establish new home ranges as young ones grow up and maybe the population gets to heavy where they are. So it's not uncommon for alligators to end up in swimming pools or, a pond in a subdivision or in a golf course, and most of the times it's really not a problem. But when people see it as a novelty and throw food scraps out to it, that's not good. It creates potential problems on down the road when an animal gets used to people as a source of food, and loses its fear of people. It may or may no be dangerous, but in the case of alligators, they can be dangerous. its also important not to throw foreign objects at them, it may be fun to watch. an alligator that is used to getting fed will snap at anything you throw at them and uh you know, garbage bags, or plastic objects, tennis balls. Anything along those lines can cause serious health problems for an animal. They swallow it, or it gets caught in their throat, they could choke, um, and that's true with all wildlife, you know a lot of problems that we have with wildlife are food related and a lot of times that food is garbage.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: Perhaps the most imposing animal that might find your garbage can attractive is the Black Bear. This bear was spotted in a north Atlanta subdivision.</b>
	>>Waters: Probably it was wandering through and smelled a grill or garbage can or pet food or something along those lines and then when it was confronted or heard noises of people and then when the sun came up and then when the world came alive with activity, it ran up the nearest tree. And so that's where we found it.
	<b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: If a bear is left alone in a situation like this, they will usually make their way back to the wild. But in this chaotic atmosphere the chances of the bear coming down on his own was very slim so the Department of Natural Resources tranquilized</b>

	<b>him, took biological data, affixed an ear tag, and relocated the bear to a more remote region of the Georgia.</b>
	>> Waters: Waking up with a hangover and a sore mouth and ear tags, it kind of makes them want to fight shy of people.
	<b>&gt;&gt; Narrator: This bear is unlikely to come back to the suburbs, but another bear could come right behind him and claim the territory.</b>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Waters: In spring, that's when the young male bears they're dispersing. It's part of their biology to disperse and cover a lot of ground and look for a home range to set up for yourself where you're not getting beat up everyday. So it's pretty typical for bears to end up in some of these mountain communities and even north Atlanta. And usually if we can leave them along and get people to leave them alone enough, they'll bounce around for a few days and then make their way back where it's comfortable for them. Their existence is pretty much solitary except for during the middle of the summer when they're breeding and or a sow with cubs, they're pretty much solitary creatures. They're shy and they're not very aggressive. They're probably the least aggressive species of bears we have in north America, but they do deserve respect because they are big and strong, so you shouldn't try and pet a bear if it appears tame or anything like that.</p> <p><b>&gt;&gt; Narrator: If you see a bear it is best to simply consider yourself lucky and to leave the bear alone. The cityscape is unsafe place for the bears. They are much better off in the wild. Some animals on the other hand have found it beneficial to live in the city. These least terns nest in the gravel atop supermarkets in Savannah. The terns would normally nest on beaches, but erosion and development has reduced much of their ideal habitat. On the upside, there are probably fewer disturbances here.</b></p> <p>&gt;&gt; Waters: There is a lot of pressure put on wildlife from human development, as we all know, but many species of wildlife are very adaptable. Deer, for example thrive in subdivisions and golf communities, there is plenty for them to eat, it's just a matter of their habitat requirements, and sometimes it's surprising to see how wonderful they do adapt. And we need to be adaptable as well. When we come into contact with wildlife a lot of folks view that as a problem, when most of the time we can modify our behavior or our houses a little bit and, and mitigate the downside and enjoy living among wildlife. I think it adds to our quality of life.</p>
	<b>&gt;&gt; Narrator: Owls and bats are both species that make use of human structures. These barn owls are yearlong residents of Georgia and can be found</b>

	<p><b>across the state. They are nocturnal animals, hunting mostly rodents and other birds between dawn and dusk. Another creature belonging to the night is the big-eared bat, one of the least understood bats in the southeast. What we do is that they roost in buildings, old mine shafts, caves, and hollows and they are only active in complete darkness.</b></p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Ozier: What a lot of people are doing that realize bats are important, but may not want them in their house is to actually construct a bat box, and this is a structure that has some narrow crevices that allows the bats to roost in. It's not always as successful as a birdhouse, but if enough people keep using them we feel like we keep getting more and more bats using, the bat boxes, and maybe even fewer in buildings where they can cause problems.</p>
	<p><b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: When viewing wildlife in the city nesting locations can be a good place to stake them out, as long as you keep a good distance and don't disturb the animals. A red-bellied woodpecker nesting cavity is a common occurrence in the city and an ideal spot to sit and watch wildlife behavior. The male red-bellied woodpecker can excavate a nest in a dead tree, telephone pole or fence post in just 7 to 10 days.</b></p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Waters: People are interested in wildlife, wildlife adds to our quality of our life and the wildlife shows that are on television are popular and people like wildlife but you don't have to take your kids to the zoo to see wildlife, just take a moment and sit on your back porch and listen, you will see birds, and hear birds and maybe see a chipmunk running through the flower bed, so wildlife is all around us and we ought to take the time to enjoy it and let our kids learn a little bit about wildlife, its, its always funny to me when my kids come home from school. They have learned about tigers and lions and elephants and things like that but we've got wildlife all around us, and the species that live in GA are as unique and interesting as anywhere in the world and uh we ought to count ourselves lucky</p>
	<p><b>&gt;&gt;Narrator: Viewing wildlife can be an exhilarating experience. And wildlife is just about everywhere. Your backyard is good place to start, but there are also places within our cities that have been set aside as a preserve just for wildlife.</b></p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Ramsey: We are at south peachtree creek nature preserve which is a very unusual urban nature preserve that was saved from development a number of years ago. It includes a wetland area, and a</p>

	<p>beaver pond and a pine forest and an oak hickory forest, and it's very unusual because you can walk along the boardwalk and see all these changes in habitat and enjoy nature. It's a beautiful place to come watch birds and it's a wonderful place just to get some quiet at the end of the day.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Butler: I really believe that areas like this need to be protected. Greenspace in general needs to be protected so that people don't have to drive two hours to find some forest to walk through and relax in. it's so important for our kids today to have a place close by home I think. Everybody should have within 10 or 15 minutes a place where they can go to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city and the cars and the noise.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;<b>Narrator: As our cities expand and consume more and more wildlife habitat, perhaps these small urban oases are even more important to the wildlife that live here... than they are for the humans who visit.</b></p> <p><b>Georgia Outdoors Theme Song</b></p>