

URBAN ANIMALS

LITTLE WYOMING

The phrase “Wyoming wildlife” evokes images of pronghorns bounding across the sagebrush steppe, grizzly bears lumbering through a forest and eagles soaring high over a wide open prairie. But wildlife aren’t just found in these wild places; they also live among people in towns and cities!

The Urban Environment

The urban environment is characterized by roads, traffic, buildings and human activity. Urban environments are warmer than surrounding natural habitat because roads and buildings trap heat. Cities and towns are much brighter and noisier than surrounding natural habitat. Many urban areas do not have much green space, which provides valuable shelter and resources for wildlife species. Because of the difficulties presented by the urban environment, the variety of species that live in urban areas is relatively low.

City Livin’

In general, the species that live and thrive in urban areas are relatively small and have a diverse diet. It would be difficult for a large animal like a moose to find shelter in the city, but it is much easier for small animals like squirrels! Still, the species that live in urban areas have had to adapt in order to survive this complex environment. Some species, like coyotes, are more nocturnal in urban areas than in natural areas in order to avoid cars and people. Some urban bird species have been observed singing at higher pitches than usual so they can be heard over the sound of cars and city noises. Some animals, like raccoons and mice, have even learned to use storm drains to navigate underneath roads to avoid cars.

Living in Harmony

Although the proximity of wildlife to humans in urban areas can cause conflicts, wildlife in urban areas can also provide benefits. For example, urban insects like bees and moths help us pollinate our gardens to grow food that sustains us, and urban songbirds and bats can help keep insect populations under control. It is a privilege to observe Wyoming’s wildlife, whether that’s in wild areas or from the comfort of our own homes!

