



All about  
**Pond  
Predators**

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# Pond Predators

## Introduction

Have you ever viewed your pond, looked for a particular fish and it appeared to be missing? Unfortunately, dreaded pond predators may have eaten it. Ponds are fertile feeding grounds for predators and can become a pond owner's greatest nightmare. Fish make up the diet of many scavengers and they come to feed by air and land.

As a pond owner, you have the right to try to protect your investment. But be mindful of choices that are available to control the predators. Federal and State laws are in place that makes it illegal to shoot or cause injury to a bird of prey without a Federal permit.

Due to technology and creativity from vendors, alternative methods are available for controlling pond predators. During the design of your pond, address this issue with the contractor to protect your investment. By increasing the depth of the pond, some waterfowl may not be a problem. But no matter how hard you try, there is no guarantee that any method will keep the predators away.

## General Description

If you have not experienced pond predators, you will definitely have your opportunity. No matter what time of year, there is always some threat to your pond. They are characterized as wildlife or birds that disrupt the ecosystem of the pond by eating the fish. It is not uncommon for the fish in the pond to fight against them. The use of traps, decoy, netting, alarms, fencing, water deterrents, repellents or alternative food and water may be used. Trapping animals may not be a popular method, but it is an alternative method of control. The object of predator control is not to kill the predator but to deter it from eating the fish.

## Types of Predators

Ponds may attract a wide variety of predators to eat the fish. Some may think that the dreaded cat is the only predator of the fish, but that may not be true. Predators may include birds such as hawks, owls, or blue heron; small animals such as raccoons, and ducks; and other water animals such as snakes, leeches, parasites, turtles, frogs and toads.



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## Birds

The blue heron is one of the most dreaded birds of all fish and fisherman. This bird is attracted to bright, bold colors and will hide in shades of trees used to protect the pond. Its long legs allow it to wade in water about 2 feet. It is recommended that the depth of the pond should be constructed at least 3 feet to keep the heron out. It is a patient bird and will wait for fish to come to him. Ponds are a great feeding ground for the heron and given a few days, it will consume all the fish in a pond. His diet includes frogs, snakes mice and insects. Herons do not land directly into the water, but will feed from the sides of the pond. When constructing your pond, make the side uncomfortable for the heron. It is important to remember that the threat of the blue heron visiting your pond is real. It is against the law to kill a heron and you may be charged a fine of \$10,000.00.

Other birds such as hawks or owls are also known predators and may swoop down from the trees that protect the pond and grab the fish. It is very difficult to control the pond from this type of predator.

## Small Animals

The raccoon is the second most common predator of the pond. Normally raccoon will not venture out to the pond in the daytime, but they still create a threat to the fish. They usually hunt at night and are good fishermen. They are able to climb any fence and love to eat fish, crayfish, mussels, snails and turtles. If you build your pond with a ledge overhang, it may deter the raccoon because it can't touch the bottom. Pond lights may help, because raccoons do not like the light.

Minks love to eat fish, can swim, and love to eat cats as well. Cats do not move very quickly, and will wait until the opportunity presents to launch out and catch the fish.

## Other Water Animals

Other water animals such as frogs, toad, aphids, leeches and duck also visit ponds. These animals may be harder to control due to the fact that their natural environment is the pond.

## Predator Control and Prevention

### Netting

Predator netting is one way to protect the fish from cats, birds, some small animals, pets, and small children from falling into the pond. This netting can also assist in preventing debris from falling into the pond. The best defense for the blue heron, hawk, owl or raptor is the use of the netting. When an owl or raptor is injured, great care must be taken to detangle it from the net by contacting a Wildlife agency to remove it.

### Alarms

Goosebuster is an actual alarm of Canadian geese recorded under natural conditions. Geese recognize these calls and react by evacuating without waiting to find the sources. These calls are a random combination and differ in frequency, duration and intervals.



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## Fencing

Fencing is a good way to protect small children from falling into a garden pond and hurting themselves. Wooden predator fencing provides security and safety to pets and children. Due to persistency of some small animals, battery-powered electric fences can be used to protect the pond and shock animals with a low voltage that will not kill them. However, this control is not recommended for keeping birds out of the pond.

## Deterrents

Water deterrents include a motion-sensor that will spray the predator when it approaches the pond.

## Decoys

The use of plastic decoy fish with an anchor line floating in the water will deter some birds. The blue heron plastic statue or scarecrow will deter some blue heron because these birds are territorial and may not enter the pond when another bird is present.

## Alternative Food and Water

Goose chase is environmentally safe and is a non-toxic tasting agent, which leaves the food sources inedible. The goose or duck will leave and go to a better food source.

## Repellents

Repellents are used to frighten the birds by making a loud sound, which may agitate or disorient them. The birds perceive that they hear danger and usually will leave the sight. The blue heron caller will sound like the call of a blue heron. You must use caution during mating season because this decoy may attract the birds to the pond.



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