



Gator Guard

JUST IN CASE

A NEW BREED OF SCARECROWS

BY JUSTIN CHAN AND RACHEL HALPERN

In the battle of man against nature, nature seems to have the upper hoof, wing, and claw. In 2009, in one Connecticut county alone, deer overpopulation cost residents an estimated \$124 million in landscaping and environmental damage, or an average of \$619 per household. Meanwhile, since 1990 the Canada goose population has quadrupled to some four million today, with each of those birds eating up to four pounds of grass a day (and leaving behind half of that in droppings). Add in ducks, raccoons, and rabbits, and it's bad news for homeowners, who spend around \$40 billion per year to maintain and improve their yards. But with these modern scarecrows, there's hope.

● **TO FRIGHTEN CROWS, PIGEONS, GULLS, OTHER FLYING NUISANCES**

The decoy: **Screech Owl** (\$120, Birdbusters) has a photo cell that activates four sounds—including those of predators—from a rotating base.

Why consider it: Birds, while not brainiacs, tend to dislike the owl's sounds.

● **GEESE, DUCKS, SMALL ANIMALS**

The decoy: **Gator Guard** (\$69, Bird-X), a model of an alligator head with mirrored

eyes that flash in the light, is specifically designed for a pond.

Why consider it: This decoy bobs in water, better mimicking an actual predator.

● **CROWS, PIGEONS, SQUIRRELS, SNAKES**

The decoy: **Hawk Decoy** (\$20, Bird-B-Gone) is a genuine-looking bird of prey that doesn't do much more than sit and stare.

Why consider it: Hawks are daytime predators, so decoys that resemble them may

be more effective than owls (which prey may not see at night and won't recognize as a predator during the day).

● **WOODPECKERS**

The decoy: **Birds-Away Attack Spider** (\$15, attackspider.com). This furry battery-operated, sound-activated gizmo looks a bit like a Halloween prop: It drops down on an 18-inch string while making a loud noise, then climbs back up.

Why consider it: The notion of a woodpecker trying to find insects in your house's siding may just be worth the \$15 outlay.

● **GEESE AND OTHER BIRDS, SQUIRRELS, RABBITS, SKUNKS**

The decoy: **3D-Coyote** (\$62, Bird-X). Made of molded plastic with a furry tail, this decoy is attached to a stake that allows you to move it around your lawn.

Why consider it: It looks convincing from every angle, and since bird vision is quite strong, the Coyote can theoretically be more effective than sound machines at long ranges.

● **GEESE**

The decoy: **Dead Goose Decoy** (\$110 for two, Birdbusters) is a realistic replica posed to look as if it died a gruesome death.

Why consider it: Unlike standard decoys, this one

tricks geese into thinking a predator has made a fresh kill, and it works on land and water.

● **BLUE HERONS**

The decoy: **Blue Heron Decoy** (\$30, United Aquatics) is a lawn-ornament-like statue designed to keep real herons from koi and other fish ponds.

Why consider it: The theory is that herons respect one another's hunting territory and will keep flying if they see one of their own feeding. Note: You'll need to relocate the decoy frequently to maintain its effectiveness.

● **DEER, DOGS, OTHER ANIMALS**

The decoy: **Scarecrow Motion-Activated Animal Deterrent** (\$89, Contech). This hooks up to a garden hose, uses a motion detector to sense animals, and then emits a pressurized water jet and a loud sound to shoo them away.

Why consider it: The jet can spray up to 35 feet, though critters may eventually outsmart it.

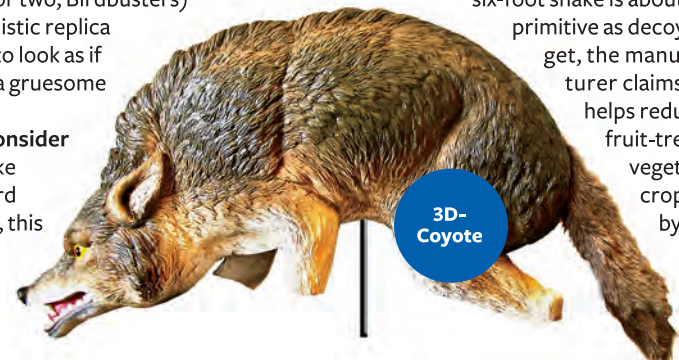
● **STARLINGS, OTHER FRUIT-EATING BIRDS, SQUIRRELS, GULLS**

The decoy: **Inflatable Snake** (\$10, Dalen).

Why consider it: Though this fake six-foot snake is about as primitive as decoys get, the manufacturer claims it helps reduce fruit-tree and vegetable-crop losses by up to 50 percent.



Dead Goose Decoy



3D-Coyote

FROM TOP: COURTESY BIRDBUSTERS; COURTESY BIRD-X

COURTESY BIRD-X