



**SUPPORT:** HB0701, Clean Air Quiet Communities Act, submitted by Nancy Lawson

The scenes unfold every day in communities across the country: A tiny bat is leaf-blown out of his winter hibernation from under fallen leaves. A bluebird abandons her nest-making when the sounds of two-stroke engines drown out her calls. A bumblebee searches in vain for flowers because she can't pick up on scent cues amid heavy exhaust.

The sounds and smells and tornado-force impact of gas-powered leaf blowers can have far-reaching consequences for us and our wild neighbors. But those consequences are all too often hidden from our collective conscience. Studies show that even birds still considered common, such as goldfinches and white-breasted nuthatches, avoid noisy areas. This could have potentially massive implications for local ecosystems.

In my own habitat, I've watched monarch caterpillars rear their heads wildly even at the quieter sounds of a passing car. I've seen cardinals, wood thrushes, rabbits and many other animals go into hiding when lawn service employees pile out of a truck next door and start up their blowers. And in my research as a science and nature writer, I've had those observations confirmed by studies showing devastating impacts of noise pollution.

My 2023 book *Wildscape* detailed these findings: reduced egg hatching and decreased foraging; reduced ability to hear alarm calls and delayed or altered responses to mating calls; lower presence of insects and spiders; higher presence of animals like mice who may be trying to use the noise as a way to hide from predators. Plants and animals suffer measurable stress levels amid noise. Air and odor pollution also interfere with important communications among organisms, degrading or masking floral scents and making it more difficult for pollinators to find flowers.

You can't travel far anymore without having your ears blasted by sounds of leaf blowers. As someone who uses an outdoor broom to collect leaves off hardscapes quickly, I can tell you there's no disadvantage to not owning one of these noxious machines. Many visitors to my home remark on its peacefulness and how much it looks, smells and sounds like favorite places from childhood. You don't need to do anything particularly special to create such an oasis; our place is so welcoming because of what we *haven't* done – we haven't interfered unnecessarily with the health and sensory environment of our neighbors, both human and wild. Imagine how much more livable our communities would be if we treated other creatures' homes as thoughtfully as we treat our own.

Thank you in advance for your support for HB0701.