

FOX POINT *files*

by Douglas H. Frazer



WILDLIFE CONTROL

Wildlife in Fox Point includes rabbits, opossum, raccoon, deer, coyote, geese, wild turkey, and the occasional red fox. These animals appear or gather in numbers that can exceed the capacity for good relations with their human neighbors.

Village ordinances (laws) attempt to address the issue. Generally, feeding of deer or nondomestic animals is prohibited and the feeding of birds is limited to feeders of a particular design suspended at least 3.5 feet above the ground. Wildlife still manages to thrive.

The reality is this: solving wildlife problems may be unrealistic. Managing wildlife problems may be the best we can reasonably expect.

Thus, the village is sometimes called upon to step in. In the past, the village has addressed nondomestic animal control matters concerning geese, deer, coyote, and wild turkey.

The village has taken census of, trapped and removed deer. When the geese problem became acute along the Indian Creek Parkway, the village hired a professional nuisance wildlife control company whose trained dogs were used to haze the geese. Recently, the village has been called upon to focus once again on issues with the coyote and wild turkey.

COYOTE

Coyotes are secretive creatures and opportunistic hunters. They primarily feed on small rodents and rabbits, but coyotes are omnivores and will eat anything that they can find including fruit, vegetables, and insects. Coyotes are frightened of humans. However, they sometimes attack and kill unleashed pets. Residents can help manage coyotes in our area:

- Do not store pet food outdoors and keep pet food bowls inside when not in use.
- Do not keep trash outdoors.
- Do not provide food and water for other wildlife. For instance, rodents are attracted to birdseed and rodents are coyotes' natural prey.
- Keep cats indoors.
- Watch dogs closely when outdoors and keep them leashed around dawn and dusk.

Municipalities all over Wisconsin are dealing with coyotes. Mequon recently adopted what city officials believe to be the state's first coyote response plan. Fox Point is studying this initiative.

Mequon's first level of response is to coordinate a public education program that teaches residents how to scare away coyotes and eliminate attractants. The second level asks residents to report coyote sightings so activity can be tracked. Mequon's third level provides information about hunting regulations. The fourth level of response is the removal of coyote through a contractor engaged to hunt or trap the animal.

Although the hunting and trapping of coyotes is allowed year round with a DNR hunting license, Fox Point municipal ordinance generally forbids firearm discharge or trapping within the village boundary.

TURKEY



Reintroduction of Eastern wild turkey into Wisconsin began in 1976. The success of this effort is significant and has led to an increase in human-turkey conflict. Our parks and the bluff provide an excellent habitat for turkeys and urban areas host few natural predators. Residents along the bluff

have counted a raft of turkeys in excess of 40. Turkeys forage in gardens and lawns, roost in trees and on homes, and can act aggressively towards humans and pets during the spring mating season.

Adopting a disciplined, common sense approach is a good start. Feeding encourages turkeys to be unafraid of humans and even following people for handouts. Refrain from feeding and remove birdseed from the ground, eliminating an easy food source that draws turkey into yards.

If an area of interest, like a garden, is relatively small, a fence may be sufficient to keep turkeys out. Scare tactics, such as predator decoys, sticks and fences decorated with Mylar flagging, noise machines or even squirting water at them with a hose, may make turkeys uncomfortable and encourage them to move on. Non-toxic, biodegradable repellants such as methyl anthranilate can be sprayed on crops, gardens, and lawns to keep turkeys from using the area.

The village is studying the issue and will have to decide whether wild turkey management efforts, for instance contracting for trapping and removal, would be a sensible idea.

Wild turkeys, like coyote and other wildlife, are here to stay. The questions are at what population level and what efforts the village should take to manage the situation. Hopefully, a reasonable accommodation can be reached with the furry and feathered friends within our midst.

Douglas H. Frazer is a trustee on the Fox Point Village board. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the village, the village board, other village board members, or Best Version Media, LLC.

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