

Featured Property of the Month

September 2014

CRITTERS: LIVING WITH WILDLIFE AT THE SPRINGS



Observing the beauty of wildlife is part of the pleasure of living at The Springs; having your shrubbery and flowers eaten by deer is part of the aggravation. (A few deer-resistant plants are listed at the end of this feature.)

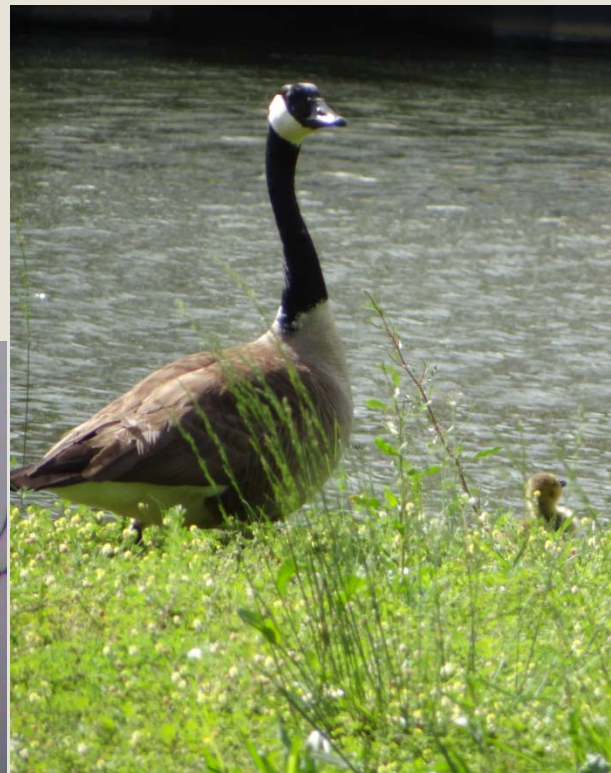
A large diversity of animals, actually most any found in the state except the seashore, live in or around this community. Bears have been seen within the city limits of Greensboro and Winston-Salem-- just not here yet??? Feral hogs are found throughout the state. Instead of taking away their natural habitat, many types of wildlife have adapted and even thrived due to human presence.



Raccoon



Bald Eagle



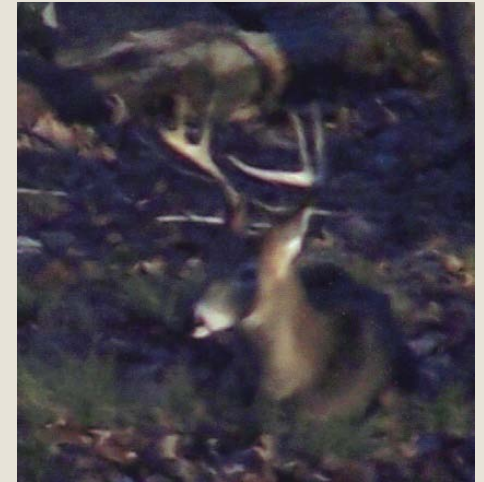
Canada Geese

MAMMALS:

DEER

A love/hate relationship with deer exists amongst people here. Our yards are their salad bar and they carry ticks which can cause Lyme disease, and several other tick born diseases. Still, some people enjoy their presence and even encourage them to come into their yards with food.

With prior approval, the ARC will allow certain fences to be constructed that will enclose a portion of a backyard. The preferred type of fence is the black metal (aluminum) kind which can be seen at the Clubhouse. Deer can jump very high fences, but usually they will take an easier route, if possible. Otherwise, avoid planting tender, edible plants which will attract them.



COYOTE

Unheard of some years ago, they are now found in every county of the state.

Vicki Lindow says, “We’ve got coyote here in the Springs. They are most likely a healthy addition to our community, unless you are a cat (or a fawn)! Coyote are wonderful for keeping us free of small rodents like rats and moles. They’re shy and are rarely seen. They do, however eat , among other things, cats and sometimes fox...they don’t bother us or our dogs unless it’s a very small, unattended dog and usually it’s only at night. They are attracted to meat products so if you don’t want them near your property keep your dog or cat food inside. I really hope that this info does not create hard feelings toward our coyote. They really are good to have around. Mainly I want to alert the many cat (and small dog) owners.”



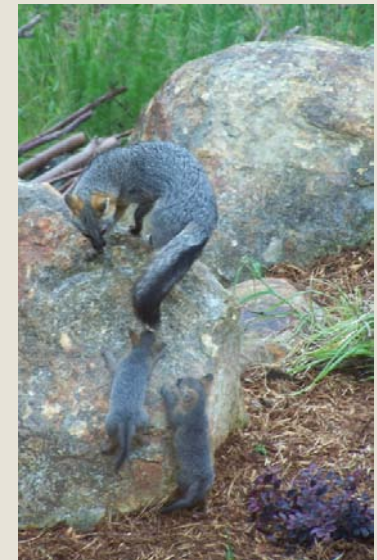
Coyote

SQUIRREL, CHIPMUNK



FOXES

Usually we think of foxes as being nocturnal animals and then a mother gray fox and her five kits took up temporary residence under our deck. They were cute, looked healthy, and then disappeared into the woods.





Opossum



Eastern Cottontail Rabbit



Porcupine



Bobcat



Raccoon



Skunk

TICKS

There are several varieties of ticks that are carried by all furry critters. In NC, the Lone Star tick can transmit ehrlichiosis, babesiosis, Southern Lyme (STARI), possibly Lyme disease and several other nasty diseases. The brown tick and the American dog tick transmit Rocky Mountain spotted fever, etc. Deer ticks or Black-legged ticks transmit most all of the above mentioned diseases. They can come into our yards via deer and other wild animals, pets, or by simply crawling.



To remove a tick from our skin, use pointed tweezers and pull the tick straight out. Do not try to burn the tick first as the tick might regurgitate something worse into us. Use alcohol on the wound and wash your hands thoroughly. To save the tick for further analysis, tape it to a card and immerse it in a container of alcohol.

RABIES

Most any mammal can carry rabies so it is best not to try to domesticate wild animals.

Rabies is a 100% fatal disease in all mammals including man. The natural reservoirs of this virus in our woods are, bats, raccoons, skunks and foxes. By law, dogs, cats and ferrets must be vaccinated by four months of age (or later if a previous history is unknown). Vaccinated animals must be confined for 10 days after biting another person. If your pet is not currently vaccinated and is bitten by an animal that is or might be rabid, animal control is required by law to either quarantine the pet for six months or euthanize it (NCGS 130A-197). That choice must be made by the local health director.

If you or any member of your family has any possibility of being exposed to a possibly rabid animal (any wild animal since it would be unnatural to be in contact with a healthy one in a forest setting), it is imperative to seek advice from the DC Department of Health and Services immediately. After ten days the safe effective vaccine will do no good and there is no cure.

Several cases of rabies have been reported recently in Davidson County. A dog attacked a rabid raccoon and another attacked a rabid skunk. The dogs had to be euthanized.

REPTILES:

SNAKES

Most people are not fans of these slithering creatures. In short, avoid them and leave them be. Many snake bites occur when people try to kill them. Even killing a snake might mean that it is replaced by a worse one in its territorial space. Also, snakes eat large numbers of rodents which carry disease and they eat other crop-harming animals.

Generally, snakes that climb on walls and trees are nonpoisonous whereas poisonous snakes are usually ground dwellers that hang out around tall grass, rocks, and logs. Venomous varieties include copperheads and several rattlers.

Always check any shoes or boots left outside before you stick your feet inside. Be careful where you step—especially at night where a snake could be resting for the night.

Black snakes, which are common to The Springs, are harmless and are said to keep away poisonous snakes. Even nonpoisonous snake bites can make you sick, however. A good field guide can help you identify the different varieties.

Snake-prevention products are considered useless. Anything that attracts rodents to your yard such as pet food and wood piles will also attract snakes. We're usually nearer to snakes than we realize. Some have lived in certain areas for many years.



Black Rat Snake



Copperhead



Lizard



Blue-tail Skink

BIRDS:

TURKEY VULTURES (BUZZARDS)

Once called pallbearers in the sky, these buzzards are graceful in flight but quite ugly up close. They serve a good purpose—they eat carrion, for example.



Turkey Vultures have a nasty habit of sitting on the highest peak of a house on the ridge line and littering it guano. The Turkey Vultures can be discouraged from this behavior by a simple addition to your home. Run a taunt copper wire between two eyelets placed on the roof peak. Buy an inexpensive solar cell to feed a light electrical current onto the copper wire. The Turkey Vultures do not seem to like that tingling feeling in their feet and they avoid that roof.

TURKEYS



Turkeys are not seen as often as they were when the community was just being developed. A flock of about eight or more seemed to have dwindled to a flock of one when last spotted.



DUCKLINGS and CANADA GEESE



PILEATED WOODPECKER

If you are so fortunate to observe the illusive pileated woodpecker, on which the cartoon Woody Woodpecker was modeled, you have seen the largest woodpecker in the U.S. It is on the endangered species list. You may have heard one pecking on old wood searching for insects and spiders or excavating a nest hole.



LIST OF DEER-RESISTANT PLANTS

Of course, it should be understood that at the end of the winter when deer get very hungry, they will eat most any plant available. At any rate, some success has been achieved with plants that have thorns (except roses which they seem to love) and plants that emit a strong odor. Some people buy products or mix up their own liquids which repel deer until the rain washes it off and the application has to be repeated. Here are just some plants deer seem to avoid. Many others can be found on the Internet.

Irises

Buddleia (butterfly bush)

Marigolds

Lantana

Barberry

Yucca

Most evergreens

Foxglove (poisonous)

Canna

Verbena

Daffodils/jonquils

Many herbs (rosemary, dill, etc.)

THE HUNTER OR THE HUNTED



OTHER ANIMALS

There are too many other birds, fish, and lake animals to mention in this feature. Here we just mention a few that could be seen in our yards.

MULLIGAN

Due to their relocation, we bid a fond farewell to Mulligan, the cat, and to Ed and Nancy who care for him. Mulligan was a familiar resident critter and free-spirit of this mountaintop for many years and will be missed by the neighbors.



Credits

The information and photos of the snakes were taken from Alive Supplement (Fall 2004) of the North Carolina Zoological Society.

Photos of the coyote, opossum, eastern cottontail rabbit, porcupine, bobcat, skunk, the second turkey photo, and the pileated woodpecker are from NCpedia.org

Vicki Lindow provided the information about the coyote

Dr Curtis Ish provided much information about ticks and rabies

Photography by Dick Getz & Anne Croom

Article by Anne Croom & Dick Getz