

Nature in the Neighborhood – February 2023

Sharing the Neighborhood with Wildlife

They may not be aliens from a dying planet invading the Earth with the intent of taking it over (as in H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* or, for those who may remember, the 1960s TV series *The Invaders*) but, to some, wildlife species are invading the suburbs and seemingly starting to take them over.

What many people seem to forget, however, is that it's actually the other way around – it's us, not them, that are the invaders. We've moved into their ancestral habitats and are taking them over and transforming them into housing developments and shopping malls.

And I guess you can say, like those aliens, they are from a dying world, or at least a dying habitat, thanks in large part to us.

There was a time when spotting a turkey walking down the road would have raised eyebrows; not any more, they're now a part of suburbia, nothing out of the ordinary. In their quest for survival, they've moved into our neighborhood and are causing many people to be either annoyed with their presence or nervous. We were used to squirrels and song birds coexisting with us, but not ornery turkeys and certainly not coyotes.

All kinds of species, including skunks, raccoons, opossum, foxes, deer, and bears, in addition to turkeys and coyotes, are showing up more frequently in Massachusetts' neighborhoods -- and communities are struggling to find ways to co-exist with them. That struggle is perhaps best exemplified by the coyote situation in Nahant which has divided the community. Coming up with a program for reducing human-coyote conflicts is not easy, or one that everyone can agree on, but the Conservancy believes the first step is always education, and understanding the facts.

To that end, the Swampscott Conservancy will be co-sponsoring with the Town of Swampscott, a second talk by Dan Proulx, a licensed state wildlife rehabilitator, on the topic human interaction with wildlife, this time focusing on coyotes. Entitled *How to Safely Co-Exist with Coyotes: Keeping Pets Safe* his talk will be in person on **March 7, 2023 at 6:30 pm** in Room B 129 at the Swampscott High School. The talk will be recorded and later put on both the Town's and Conservancy's websites. His earlier presentation on interactions with all kinds of wildlife can be viewed at youtube.com/watch?v=GnpgY23vuvM

As a footnote, I'll add that not all the wildlife that invades our neighborhood are considered troublesome, some it seems even charm us. Take for instance, a recent seal pup's appearance on Phillips Beach. Dubbed "our bay seal friend" by the police, residents flocked to take photos of the seal pup. Like "Shoebert," the gray seal found swimming at Shoe Pond in Beverly last year, we empathize with this pup, either

because he is cuter than turkeys or thought to be less threatening than coyotes, and so we accept sharing our neighborhood with him.

Toni Bandrowicz, President
The Swampscott Conservancy