

Living With Wildlife



The abundance of wildlife in Pine Brook Hills is for many residents one of the reasons they choose to live here. On most days we can look outside our windows and see birds and squirrels. On other days turkeys, bears, wildcats, deer, coyotes, or mountain lions may grace us with their presence. While beautiful, that abundance of wildlife and close proximity can sometimes cause problems:

woodpeckers pecking holes in the siding, squirrels making nests in the chimney, bears feasting on the trash. So what can mountain residents do to co-exist peacefully with their wild neighbors?

Colorado Parks and Wildlife notes that the key to successful co-existing is respecting the “wildness” of wildlife. According to the CPW, most dangerous and potentially harmful encounters occur because people fail to leave wild animals alone. “Wildlife should not be harassed, captured, domesticated or—in most cases—fed. Intentional or inadvertent feeding is the major cause of most wildlife problems.” Other than birds and squirrels, it is actually illegal in Colorado to feed most wild animals.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING PROBLEMS

FORTUNATELY, THERE ARE LOTS OF STRATEGIES FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE WITH WILDLIFE.

DON'T FEED WILD ANIMALS... on purpose or inadvertently. Wild animals are good at finding their own food and people food can be harmful to them. Feeding them contributes to their losing their natural fear of us and puts them at risk for negative encounters. Put bird and squirrel feeders where they cannot be reached by other animals.

COVER WINDOW WELLS. Use grates, hardware cloth, or chicken wire.

CLOSE HOLES AROUND THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR HOME. Anything larger than 1/4 inch should be sealed to keep out rats, mice, bats, and snakes.

TAKE CARE WITH YOUR GARBAGE AND RECYCLING CONTAINERS. Store them in a secure place where wildlife cannot access and/or use containers that don't allow access. Put your trash out the morning of pick-up...never leave the cans out overnight.

KEEP PET FOOD INSIDE and feed your pets inside.

SCREEN CHIMNEY FLUES, attic and dryer vents, and keep dampers closed.

SLOW DOWN when you see a deer near the road. When you see one deer, there are likely others nearby who may venture into the road unexpectedly.

WATCH YOUR PETS. Don't let them roam on their own. They may attack wildlife or be attacked by wildlife.

LEAVE THE BABIES ALONE. Don't assume that just because you don't see the parents, the young have been abandoned. Watch for a while to determine that. If you are absolutely certain the parent animal is gone or dead, record the location and contact CPW.

DON'T TRY TO MAKE A WILD ANIMAL INTO A PET. They are cute. They are intriguing. But they don't make good pets and often can't survive on their own if kept in captivity even for a short while. It is actually illegal in Colorado to possess most species of wildlife. Contact CPW or a local rehabilitative agency for help.

PICK UP ANY LITTER THAT MAY BLOW ON TO YOUR PROPERTY or be left there by someone else. We all know that discarded plastic six-pack holders can be deadly for birds, but many other kinds of litter are potentially lethal for wild animals.

Mountain Lions and Bears



In the past couple of years there have been many mountain lion and bear sightings in Pine Brook Hills.

In this area mountain lions are usually tawny to light cinnamon colored with black tipped ears and tails. A full grown lion weighs 90-150 pounds and is 6-8 feet long. Their tails are as long as one third of their body length. Mountain lions are most active from dusk to dawn. They eat mostly deer and will prey on smaller animals as well as domestic pets.

Our black bears may actually be some shade of brown. Adult males average 275 pounds but can weigh as much as 450 pounds. Black bears are about 3 feet high when on all four feet or about 5 feet tall standing upright. They have been seen in Pine Brook at all times of the day or night. 90% of a bear's diet is plant materials, while about 10% consists of animals. In Pine Brook they are especially attracted to bird feeders, barbecue grills, and garbage cans. Try not to invite a bear to dinner.

Since we live in lion and bear country there is a possibility that you may encounter one of these animals. The following precautions will help us live in harmony with the wildlife and possibly prevent a confrontation:

- Children should not play outdoors alone and should always come inside before dusk.
- Make noise when you walk or hike, especially from dusk to dawn, to avoid surprising a lion or bear.
- Never approach a lion kill or a feeding lion.
- Make sure pets and pet food are inside at night. A pet enclosure may be used if completely enclosed including a roof. Chaining a pet is not recommended. Outdoor cats have very short life expectancies in Pine Brook.
- Never feed wild animals, especially deer, or encourage them to come into your yard. Deer are the mountain lion's primary prey.
- Don't put garbage out at night. Wait until the morning of your garbage collection day.

The Division of Wildlife recommends the following actions if you encounter a mountain lion or bear:

- Do not panic or make quick movements. You can't outrun a lion or bear.
- Back away SLOWLY without turning your back on the lion or bear.
- Try to appear as large as possible – never crouch down, as you may look like prey.
- Fight back if attacked. Wild animals have been driven away when people have fought back with rocks, sticks, binoculars, and even their bare hands.

If you experience any type of close encounter with a lion or bear, or feel threatened by one, call the Colorado Division of Wildlife at 291-7227, or Boulder Emergency Dispatch Center at 441-4444.

Animal Control

Dogs chasing deer are a big problem in Pine Brook Hills. Boulder County Ordinance 97-1 makes it unlawful for the owner of a dog to allow the dog to run at large. There are severe fines imposed on owners of dogs harassing wildlife. The term “harassing wildlife” is broadly interpreted. Any time a report is made by animal control officers or wildlife officers, a \$200 fine can be imposed, with an additional \$500 if a deer is killed or has to be destroyed by the officers.

Boulder County Ordinance also makes it unlawful for a person owning or keeping a dog to fail to prevent the dog from disturbing the peace by loud, persistent and habitual barking. Anyone troubled by dogs barking or running at large will surely want to talk first with the owner. If that is ineffective one can call the Boulder County Sheriff at 441-3626.

Please take a moment to read and think about the County Ordinances and your responsibility as a dog owner and neighbor in Pine Brook Hills. Please provide a safe environment for your pet, for other pets, for the kids, the wildlife, and your neighbors.

Turkeys

By Peter D. Goldfinch

By wild turkeys we do not mean certain wild drivers and tailgaters of Pine Brook, a subspecies of Homo Sap., but rather wild bird turkeys, more familiarly known to us as Meleagris Gallopavo. There are currently some 500,000 wild turkeys in North America and at least 23 in Pine Brook Hills.

Native only to this continent, turkeys were present long before persons of no color (Spaniards, etc.) arrived, and were known to and dined upon by the Anesazi, the Aztecs and all. Some were taken to Europe in the 1500's to become properly domesticated.

Ben Franklin proposed that the wild turkey be elected by Congress as our national bird, but it lost by one vote. A national bird with a naked head seems to have captured Congress's imagination, for it later elected the Bald Eagle to that lofty status, perhaps betraying a predilection for symbolism over substance even then. And yet, Congress did show a prescient awareness of Family Values in choosing the eagle, which is faithful lifelong to the same mate, whereas the male turkey is a promiscuous polygamist and haremizer, a prolific producer of progeny which it abandons even before their birth. A wild turkey appeared on a US postage stamp in 1957.

Our attention has been drawn to a flock of some 23 wild turkeys which winters on the south rim of Pine Brook, first seen this year in October. It is a coeducational flock, the males being distinguished by their larger size, a brighter iridescent coloration, and a feather tuft on the breast.

A turkey's diet can include seeds, insects, arachnids, buzzworms, an occasional juicy snake, as well as the cracked corn or sunflower seeds that certain humans are willing to provide. Containing up to two ounces of small stones, a turkey gizzard functions as an internal food grinder. The Italian biologist Lozzaro

Spallanzini (1729-1799) showed that turkey gizzards can break up steel needles. That's 400 pounds per square inch of crushing power. Keep your distance!

Communication takes various forms among turkeys. As in some mammals and other birds, flushing of the skin can display emotion. Several vocal patterns are apparent. When feeding, a chick-like keow-keow is heard, an incongruously tiny sound from such a large bird. When separated from the flock, a loud yelping sound can call others from a considerable distance. The alarm call consists of a sharp cluck, emitted by adults to warn the flock, or by a mother hen to gather her chicks under her tailfeathers. And, of course, we have the gobble, which occurs mainly during mating season.

Mating begins as early as mid-February. Toms will gather up to 10 hens for their personal harem, winning them over with strutting, fanning of the tailfeathers, and lots of gobbling. It is said that if you gobble at a turkey during this intense time, it may gobble back! The males also compete for mates by killing other males with their beaks and spurs. There are reports of the victorious male then copulating with the dead rival it has killed in this mating behavior. I can assure you that I personally do not intend to gobble at any of these fellows during their mating season.

The hens nest in mid-April, now separated from the males who could destroy the eggs. They lay one egg per day, up to 20, an average of 11, which incubate for 28 days. Crows are a major enemy at this time. The nest is covered with leaves at the times the hen must be absent. Rarely, as many as 3 hens will build a communal nest, with up to 40-some eggs, thus assuring that at least one hen will be present to guard the nest at all times. Within two weeks of hatching, the chicks are able to fly up to a tree branch. The males rejoin the flock in the fall.

Although capable of flying across a river, turkey, like chickens, are not strong fliers because the "white meat" or breast muscle has a poor blood supply. The "dark meat" in turkeys' legs has excellent circulation, making them prodigious runners, reportedly capable of outstripping a horse.

For those of us who like to hunt and kill, the 1994 turkey seasons in Colorado are from 4/9 to 5/22 and 9/1 to 10/2. A common hunting tactic is to detect a flock, fire a single shot to make them scatter, then take up concealment at that site. The turkeys typically return gradually to where they were last together and the hunter can pick off a few as they regroup. Bon appetit?

P.S. A hummingbird's heart beats 1200 times a minute, a turkey's about 90. That's all.

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