



The Call of the Wild

Man, beast waging war over living space

By KIMBERLY MARSELAS
Staff Writer

As an animal trapper, John Adcock deals daily with "traumatized" residents whose homes have been invaded by furry or slippery neighbors.

His family's Adcock's Trapping Service has been removing critters from buildings throughout the county for about 40 years now, but it's been busier than ever thanks to developments cutting into previously wooded areas.

"Most of these animals have it better now than they ever have," Mr. Adcock said. "They have no

predators, there's hardly any hunting . . . and they've got a new food supply."

With creatures that are quick to adapt to their changing environment, increased human contact with so-called "nuisance" animals can mean ruin for backyard gardens and trees. It can also spell damage to houses from animals who make their nests in basements or attics.

But some conflicts could be easily avoided with a little planning, according to state and county experts who work closely with wildlife.

The Department of Natural Resources Wildlife and Heritage Division offers tips on handling some small wildlife on its Web site, as well as a hotline with the Annapolis office of

the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Kendra Teter, a wildlife technician, staffs the toll-free line and handles all kinds of complaints, ranging from squirrels in the attic to coyote sightings.

The office fields 8,000 to 10,000 calls a year from people around the state. Residents in developing areas in this county are calling more often, complaining mostly about deer, especially from Annapolis north.

Ms. Teter's No. 1 suggestion for keeping pesky critters out of a back yard?

"There are going to be more and more wildlife-human contacts. The challenge in some communities is making a choice. Either they live with them and the damage to homes and the environment, or they have to do something about the problem."

— Jonathan Kays,
Maryland extension service



File photo

White-tail deer graze on snow-covered grass at Sandy Point State Park. Deer are thriving in suburbia, as wooded housing developments provide continued cover and a new food source.

"Make sure there are no attractions," she said. That can mean anything from closing trash cans securely to replanting a garden with less appealing plants to sealing off small entrances to the home.

But if your yard backs up to a wooded area, the only solution for keeping deer out could be building an 8 foot fence.

Even in the city, the exploding deer population continues to thrive.

In an effort to combat the growth of the deer herd, the state eased some restrictions on hunting does and nearly 2,000 deer were killed in the county last year.

While that was low compared to most other Maryland counties, DNR deer biologist Douglas Hotton cited area hunting restrictions here as a major reason. That, combined with a habitat that deer crave, has led to a proliferation.

"Deer love that edge effect of woods and open space," Mr. Hotton said. "The developers have made the deer habitat better than it was before by building to the edge of the woods, then leaving the rest of the forest standing."

But deer are not the only animals capable of adapting to an urban setting. Mr. Adcock expects to be busier than ever this spring going after foxes who like to make their homes on porches. Last year, his company responded to about a dozen fox calls in this county alone.



By Mark M. Odell — The Capital

Kevin Tyler of Adcock's Trapping Service removes a squirrel that had nested in the attic of a Crofton home after finding his way in through a roof vent.