

RACCOONS THRIVING!

Officer Randy Wilson and Bob Maddrey from the Wildlife Service spoke to a group of over 50 residents of Pine Knoll Shores on October 1st at the Town Hall. Some wanted to preserve the numbers of raccoon residents in the town and others would like them to go elsewhere. Wilson explained, however, that no matter who prevailed there would always be some here. The population can be controlled but cannot be eliminated. It is simply a matter of deciding how many are too many to tolerate.

It was explained that in unpopulated areas raccoon population is controlled by the availability of natural food and the amount of hunting and trapping carried on. On this island the population was much smaller before it was developed. The population has risen because hunting and trapping is not allowed and there is much more food available to them. They are thriving on the food they find in garbage cans, the dog food and cat food they steal from domestic pets, bird feed and, last but not least, the offerings of those who like to feed them.

Wilson said that his agency does not take a position or make any recommendation as to what a community should do about its raccoons. They simply respond to requests for help when there is a problem. He did say, however, that when the number is too large there is a danger of spreading contagious diseases such as parvo virus and distemper to domestic animals; a greater nuisance caused by the raiding of garbage cans, the digging up of lawns and the invasion of chimneys, attics and out buildings by these creatures. That is not to say that cutting down the population would eliminate these nuisances but it would alleviate them.

If you are bothered by raccoons here are some things you can do. First of all, remove all enticements. That means that garbage receptacles should be rendered inaccessible, dog and cat food should not be left out and, of course, you should not feed them. You can buy an electric shocking fence inexpensively at any hardware store which is easy to set up. It does not harm the animals but simply discourages them from entering the confined space. If you do not want them in your chimney a chimney cap will take care of that. Finally, if requested by the Board of Commissioners, the Wildlife will set up a program whereby they will supply the traps, the holding cages, bait and food to persons who will trap the animals, pick them up weekly and carry them to the mountains where the raccoon population needs to be built up. Trappers are paid around \$10 per animal.

For persons wishing to carry on this removal independently, check with the Chief of Police before you do this. Random trapping is illegal but it is possible to get a permit under certain circumstances. This goes for squirrels, too.

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COMMUNITY APPEARANCE COMMISSION MEETING

W. F. Parker, a partner for Bogue Sound Developments and Fairway Villas, submitted to the commission plans for the building of 32 condominiums at Fairway Villas. This is adjacent to the 16th tee on the golf course, off Oakleaf Drive.

Ann Hitch reported that her sub-committee had approved three properties for building.

Garbage put out at the curb, the night before it is collected, was a topic of discussion. If bags are broken the debris is often left on the side of the road. Suggestions were made to solve this problem. One suggestion for renters and part-time residents was to ask a neighbor to place the bag of garbage on the street on the day of collection.

Commission members are concerned about the number of dead, or fallen, trees that would be cleared off an individual's property. A plan to notify property owners was contemplated.

MARY KANYHA

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