Wildlife Biologists Welcome Questions - Wildlife Committee

Throughout the past year, there have been a variety of postings to the NWACA Facebook page regarding wildlife encounters: turkeys sighted inside a garage and occupying a back patio, bucks fighting in a yard, the raid of a chicken coop by an unknown predator, and multiple fox sightings and encounters. In many cases, urban residents are unsure how to react or respond when encountering wildlife unexpectedly near their homes. The best source of information regarding any wildlife encounters comes from a wildlife biologist.

A wildlife biologist is a college graduate with at least a bachelor’s degree in wildlife biology, general biology, zoology, or ecology. They are scientists who observe and study the behavior of animals as well as their habitats. A wildlife biologist may specialize in physiology, genetics, ecology, behavior, disease, nutrition, population dynamics, land use and/or pollution. **“They collect, analyze and interpret facts objectively and skillfully, and they can report them clearly to other people.”**  This statement accurately reflects the experience of NWACA wildlife committee members.

How do you locate a wildlife biologist? Travis County maintains a contract with Texas Wildlife Services (TWS), a cooperative program between USDA-APHIS, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, and private/public funding partners. TWS professional wildlife biologists provide education, technical assistance, and wildlife management. Stefan Hunt is the TWS professional wildlife biologist serving Travis County and the City of Austin, and he will respond to your questions regarding any wildlife you may be encountering. He is at Stefan.J.Hunt@aphis.usda.gov.

In addition, state wildlife biologists with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department provide their expertise and advice to residents of all counties in Texs. These biologists have a varying range of specialties depending on the region, population, and natural resources particular to each county. A listing by county can be found at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/> Other resources are available online but are not specific to our urban area.

If you have an encounter with wildlife that leaves you with questions or concerns, it’s good to post on Facebook! Also know you may reach out to a wildlife biologist and share with us what you learn. Wildlife biologists have the knowledge and expertise that most of us don’t!