
Greetings from the Critters

by: Penny Cox

A REPORT ON A FEW RECENT SIGHTINGS FROM MY “ROOST”

Editor: (from telephone interviews with local folks who are Penny’s longtime acquaintances and friends.) “Ranger Penny,” having “evolved” in Cave Creek and being a real lover of the desert, chooses to live high on a ridge overlooking the Cave Creek area. Her excellent lookout point from her home property as well as her experience as a former ranger in the Tonto National Forest makes her an especially qualified observer of wildlife. Penny was one of the first stewards of the desert in this area. Her parents at one time owned the Cave Creek Inn and a real estate firm and also participated in the early library and the Cave Creek Improvement Association, as did Penny who has dependably volunteered her help wherever needed in the community. Penny also managed a travel agency in Cave Creek for a couple of years and was involved with the Soroptomists. She has always been compassionate toward all animals, including in the early days a wandering Rhode Island Red rooster she finally was instrumental in catching (a local rancher roped it for her, according to Nan Byrne). Here is her report on a few recent sightings at her “roost.”



What happened was: I had just finished cleaning out and refilling all the wildlife pools and the next thing I see is a young coyote coming up to the vulture pool (the vultures have migrated away for the winter). He gets in and gives himself a good bath and when he comes out he scratches around in one of my two piles of alfalfa until he gets down to the bottom layer, whereupon he rolls around in that dirt. I thought, why does

he bother to take a bath and then come out and get all dirty again! Where the alfalfa is the deer and bunnies come to feed. That’s all I know about that.

One morning four big bucks – all with eight points - came to help themselves to alfalfa, and then off they went after that. Another morning a four-point buck came



to help himself and then went on his way. I considered it my Christmas gift that they all came.

I have visits from a Cooper's Hawk who always sits on the same tallest saguaro. On these cold mornings he puffs up his breast. I was hoping he would come down and rid me of the pigeons that are a nuisance, gobbling up the feed I put out for the birds.



I know there is a bobcat around, down at the creek, because neighbors say they've seen one, but I haven't seen him – he may come in the middle of the night. The phainopepla stay down by the creek. They feed off the mistletoe that grows on mesquite.

I've heard that ravens (and they are ravens, not crows) pick up golf balls and drop them when they realize they are not eggs. I've found some golf balls on my property uphill from the golf course in spots that golfers probably could not have sent them, so I'm assuming ravens are responsible.

On Christmas morning I was hoping to see javelinas. By gosh, they must have heard me because 12 of them turned up Christmas morning and did their thing. One or two remained a while. Then I saw deer coming down – they always stay away from javelina, I suppose for fear of getting their legs cut. One of these deer was an oddball with a twisted antler. He came right down and shooed off all but one javelina who came up to the deer and they were nose-to-nose which I've never seen before. Maybe the javelina sensed this was a deformed deer who if he had antlers in good condition would have effectively chased him off. Usually deer always scatter away when there are javelina around, but not this one. Now that a deer has made up to a javelina this is the real Christmas spirit. I couldn't believe it – if I had had my camera out I'd have taken a picture, but they didn't stay that way for long.

