

Shedding My Friends

By Pete Clark

Before making my now questionable decision to purchase and eventually move into a condominium at Windsor Gardens, I lived in my house on Lansing Street for thirty-seven years. As the original homeowners moved out or passed away, my section of Lansing Street, stretching from East Fifth Way south to First Avenue, became more ethnically diverse. As the areas to the south were developed and filled in with houses and apartment buildings, the wildlife living on or near Lansing Street became more varied and much more visible.

I got along fine with my neighbors. Unfortunately there was someone in the neighborhood who would call the police for the flimsiest of reasons. One warm summer evening Norma and I were sitting on the patio, talking and listening to a radio whose volume was turned low. We had been there about thirty minutes when a policeman came around the garage and told us to turn off the radio. We did not argue. A couple of years after Norma passed away I determined the identity of the local stoolie. My neighbor lady to the north agreed with me about his identity. The man also used antifreeze to poison animals, both domestic and wild, but I had no proof and there was nothing I could do. It's no wonder I prefer animals to people.

I have lived in our condo for two and one half years now and I have not missed the upright walking people of my old neighborhood. I do miss all of my four legged friends, from the stray cat who got me out of bed to stand guard while her kittens were being born on the patio, to the skunks who occasionally hung out near my front porch. I fed the homeless cats on Lansing Street until the City of Aurora threatened to put me in jail. That opportunity for a different experience was provided by the above mentioned nice man. I have seen as many as four foxes, three beautiful vixens and a scraggly male, together in my front yard. Mostly I would see just the male, sometimes with one vixen.

A coyote lived in the neighborhood and came into my yard once in a while. A family of raccoons liked my yard. They would come onto my front porch and drink from Cheetah Cat's outdoor bowl when I was standing near their water hole. The raccoons found the garage door open and took up residence in my attic. I kept the garage door propped open until one day they were not home. I completely closed the door and the problem was solved without calling in a professional killer. I also had lots of squirrels, many cottontails and, rarely, a deer.

I miss my four legged friends. Though four legged friends can be a problem at times, they are far more trustworthy than the two legged variety.