

Loose in the Foothills

by Bob Ring

Guests for Thanksgiving Dinner

Pat and I are having guests for Thanksgiving dinner today. We have a couple of extra chairs at the table. In a flight of fancy I thought about the first Thanksgivings in New England – you know, the ones in those old pictures where all the forest animals are sharing a fabulous dinner with the Pilgrims and Native Americans.

What would happen if Pat and I invited some of the Foothills animals that have visited us in the past year?

We could invite a Gila Monster - maybe the one who swam across our backyard pool, or the one we've seen scurrying across the back patio, or the one I found in the garage, wrapped around the back tire of my SUV.

We could invite a bobcat, or two, or three. Momma bobcat and kittens have visited more than once. We seem to be on some kind of bobcat trail. Not only do they march brazenly across the patio, about 10 feet from my TV chair, but we've had them on the deck outside our upstairs bedroom. One time a fortunate bobcat happened to be sitting below our dining room window to catch a dove that had just "thwomped" against the window at high speed.

Maybe a deer would appreciate a good Thanksgiving meal. We're also apparently on a deer trail (oh, oh) and a doe or two frequently pass by. Our big deer surprise came one day when we were coming through the gate of our subdivision to find a buck with a full set of antlers calmly walking down the street in front of us, like he was checking out the neighborhood.

I've lived on my ridge for 13 years now and am still fascinated watching hawks circle endlessly overhead. I have never seen one get lucky. Those guys must be pretty hungry by now; I'll bet they'd like a free meal.

Speaking of birds, how about the cactus wren that flew in our front door as I opened it to get the mail. Talk about a merry chase. In desperation Pat and I shooed the bird upstairs, closed off the bedroom, and opened the door to our deck. The bird finally took the hint and decided to depart, but not before leaving us a little "pooped," if you know what I mean.

Our most deserving animal visitors must be coyotes – always scrawny and looking like they've barely made it to Tucson after trotting all the way from New England. But they'd probably eat too much!

I'm on the right track now; I need an animal that won't eat a lot. How about an insect, say a scorpion? We've already had one memorable visit from a scorpion. In the middle of the night, in our own bed, Pat was stung by a scorpion. Nothing like a panic call to the poison hot line (no big deal; just wait out the throbbing aches with your usual pain medicine). The experience prompted a thorough spraying, complete "spring cleaning" of our bedroom, and the investment in a special UV flashlight that highlights scorpions. A day later, I found the scorpion in the doorway to our bedroom! Finally Pat can sleep without the lights on! Come to think of it, that scorpion is not available to come to Thanksgiving dinner.

What additional Foothills animal visitors could you invite to dinner today?



This lucky bobcat picked up a free meal under my dining room window.
(Photo by Bob Ring)