

ISSUE 5 | FALL 2019

# WILD RHODE ISLAND EXPLORER

**IN THIS EDITION...**

**ALL YOU NEED  
TO KNOW ABOUT  
ARCHERY**

**LIVING  
ALONGSIDE  
WILDLIFE IN YOUR  
BACKYARD**



**MEET THE  
RACCOON!**





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**IN THIS EDITION**

<b>HABITAT CHAT</b>	
Wildlife in Your Backyard.....	3
<b>EXPLORERS IN ACTION</b> .....	4
<b>OUR WILD NEIGHBORS</b>	
Raccoon .....	5
<b>OUT IN THE FIELD</b>	
Archery 101 .....	6
<b>THE CRITTER CAM</b> .....	8
<b>CAPTION CONTEST</b> .....	9
<b>WILD QUEST</b> .....	10
<b>CREATIVE CORNER</b> .....	11
<b>BOOK NOOK</b> .....	12

Wild Rhode Island Explorer | Fall 2019

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# HABITAT CHAT



Geri Grande

## Wildlife in Your Backyard



Allen

"Wait, that's not the neighbor's cat!" A bobcat slinks across a driveway in Charlestown.

Where do you call home? Do you live on a busy street in the city? How about a neighborhood with lots of lawns and gardens? Do you live on a farm or in the woods? Wherever you live in this little state of ours, chances are, you've seen wild animals in your yard or neighborhood. We've gotten calls from people all over Rhode Island telling us they've seen everything from squirrels and snakes to coyotes and black bears! Sometimes people are happy to see the wildlife, sometimes they're nervous, and sometimes they're just downright annoyed. Especially if they have a woodchuck munching on their veggie garden!

The important thing to remember is that most of the wild animals we see in our yards, parks, and neighborhoods are **adaptable**. This means that they can easily change their behavior to adjust to a new living situation. Animals like raccoons, coyotes, opossums, and squirrels are what we call **generalists**. They can live pretty much anywhere and are not bothered by human activities.

All wild animals are just trying to find food, water, shelter, and space in a habitat that has been changed by humans. The more we understand about our wild neighbors, the better we can learn to **coexist** and to live in harmony with them. How can we do that?

1. **DON'T FEED** wild animals. They know how to feed themselves! It can make them rely on humans for food and can actually make them sick.
2. **CREATE** healthy habitat. Plant a tree, or some nice shrubs and flowers!
3. **LEARN** about our wildlife and **SHARE** what you know with family and friends!



Peter Green, Providence Raptors

A barred owl perches in downtown Providence

# EXPLORERS IN ACTION!



How do you connect with nature? Whether you fish, hunt, bird watch, or just love being outdoors, we want to hear your story! Email your nature stories to [mary.gannon@dem.ri.gov](mailto:mary.gannon@dem.ri.gov).

# OUR WILD NEIGHBORS



USFWS

## RACCOON

**Scientific name:** *Procyon lotor*

**Range:** Raccoons range from the East Coast of the United States, all the way to the West Coast, but are absent from the area just east of the Rocky Mountains. They range south into Mexico, and north into Canada.

**Size:** Raccoons weigh between 12 and 35 pounds. They are 18 to 28 inches long, and their tails are between 8 and 12 inches long.

**Habitat:** Raccoons like forested habitat near streams, ponds, or swamps. They are also happy to live in the city, in neighborhoods, and on farms.

**Food:** Raccoons are **omnivorous**, which means they eat both plants and meat. Their natural diet includes nuts, fruits, grains, insects, frogs, eggs, small mammals, fish and birds. They will also see your backyard bird feeders, garbage cans, chickens, veggie gardens, and pet food as a free buffet! Raccoons use their front paws like hands to grab food.

**Breeding:** Baby raccoons are born in the spring. There are usually 2 to 7 babies born in each litter. Female raccoons raise their babies in hollow tree cavities but may also use chimneys or old buildings. Babies do not open their eyes until they are three weeks old.

**Predators:** Larger predators like coyotes may eat adult raccoons. Young raccoons may be eaten by bobcats, coyotes, and great horned owls.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The word “raccoon” was translated into English from the native Powhatan word, “aroughcun.” The word was written down in Captain John Smith’s list of Powhatan words. It also appears in the native Algonquian language as “ahrah-koon-em,” which means “one who rubs, scrubs, and scratches with its hands.”

# OUT IN THE FIELD

## Archery 101

By Mary Gannon, Wildlife Outreach Coordinator



*Scott is happy to be out in the woods practicing archery!*

Humans have been using bows and arrows to hunt since the Stone Age. In fact, archery is one of the oldest skills still used by humans today...However, bows and arrows have come a long way since people were hunting woolly mammoths for dinner! This fall, I wanted to learn more about archery, so I headed over to the range to chat with Scott Travers, who teaches many of our hunting and fishing classes.

**Mary:** Scott, how many different types of bows are there?

**Scott:** There are 3 main types of bows: long bows, recurve bows, and crossbows. I have them with me today to show to you.

**Mary:** Can you explain to our readers the basic parts of a bow?

**Scott:** That would depend on the type of bow you are talking about. You can see this **recurve bow** is very simple and has a string, a nocking point, an arrow rest, a handle, and the upper and lower limbs. This **compound bow** is a little more complicated. It has a wheel to assist the shooter in drawing more weight on the bow. This results in a more powerful, faster tool for the archer. This **crossbow** uses the mechanical advantage we see with the compound bow, but also has a stock similar to a firearm. You can see it also has a telescopic sight or "scope" on top that allows the archer to see the target a little better and help with aiming.

**Mary:** Do you need to use a particular kind of arrow for each bow?

**Scott:** Mary, that's a great question. The answer is yes. Every bow is different and so are the arrows that are needed for each. Think of it this way, an arrow being let loose from this compound bow is traveling at approximately 325 feet per second. That is traveling more than the length of one football field in just one second! When it leaves the bow it goes from absolute stop to 325 feet per second in an instant. With that in mind, the arrow shaft has to be strong enough so it won't bend or break. The same is true for this recurve bow, or this crossbow, which sends the arrows on their way at over 425 feet per second! Super fast!!

**Mary:** Wow, that is super fast! What are some safety rules that all archers should remember?



**Scott:** You should always keep the bow pointed in a safe direction, only nock the arrow when it is safe to do so, be aware of your target, what is in front, behind, and beyond you. For crossbows, always treat it as if it were loaded. You should **NEVER** point the bow or arrow at another person or something that you do not intend to hit with the arrow, and never send an arrow straight up into the air! (What goes up eventually has to come back down!)

**Mary:** What advice would you give to someone who is interested in becoming an archer, either for hunting or just for target practice?

**Scott:** I think archery is a great way to get outdoors and have fun. You can pick up a recurve bow similar to this one, 6 arrows, and an inexpensive target and get started. It's great exercise, you can go at your own pace, and you can practice a little every day. As you get better you can increase your distance to the target as far as you would like. I would caution people to ensure they live in an area where it is safe and legal to use the bow in their back yards before they begin! There are several archery clubs in the area where people can buy equipment, get properly fitted to a bow by a professional, and practice.



*From top to bottom: A recurve bow, a compound bow, and a crossbow*

**Mary:** What is your favorite thing about your job at the Division of Fish and Wildlife?

**Scott:** There are so many things I love about my job at Fish and Wildlife! I think my favorite is watching people do things for the first time, like catch their first fish. I love to see people do something like that, especially when it is something difficult, like tying their own fly for fly fishing.



*Scott aims for the target with his compound bow*

**Mary:** And lastly, what is your favorite Rhode Island wild animal?

**Scott:** Mary, I think this one is going to surprise you a little. My favorite wild animal in RI is the bobcat. They are great hunters, and they are very elusive. They may be in your area, but because they are so good at hiding themselves you would never know it. Do you know why they are called "bobcats?" No, it's not because they were discovered by a guy named Bob, it's because of their short, or bobbed, tails, Pretty cool!

# CRITTER CAM

A trail camera is a small, waterproof camera that can be strapped to a tree. It takes photos when it senses something moving in front of the lens. Lots of people use trail cameras for many reasons. Wildlife biologists use camera "traps" to collect information about animal populations. Hunters use them to scout for the best place to hunt deer or turkey. Some people set them up just to see what kind of critters are living in their backyards. Even though trail cameras are used for many purposes, one thing is certain — they capture some cool photos!



*A downy woodpecker perches in front of one of our trail cameras.*



*Gregory Rathbun*

*Deer shed the velvet from their antlers in the fall, which makes them pointy and smooth.*



*Jim Lee*

*A very fluffy striped skunk waddles its way into the frame...*

# CAPTION CONTEST

## LAST ISSUE'S WINNING CAPTION

7...8...9...10!  
Ready or not,  
here I come!

- Brian

### Honorable Mentions

Everyone asks, "What does the fox say?" but nobody asks, "How does the fox feel?" - Dee

Hmm...Trying to figure out if that's just a leaf, or is it dinner?

- Denise

*Amy Gottfried-Mayer*

### CAPTION THIS PIC!

Send in a caption for this photo by December 1, 2019.

We'll reveal the winning caption in our next issue! Submit your caption by sending an email to:

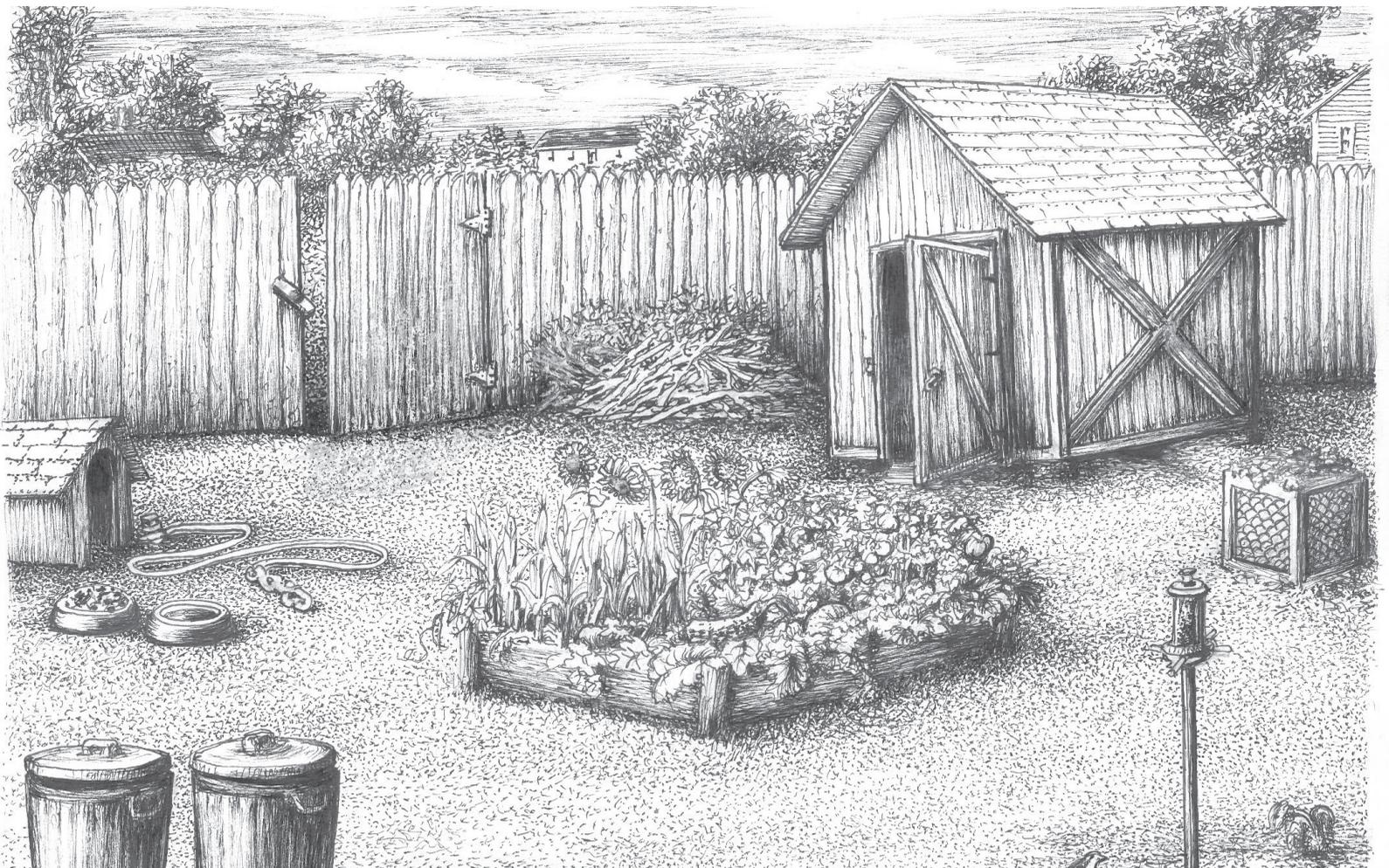
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*Paul Richards*

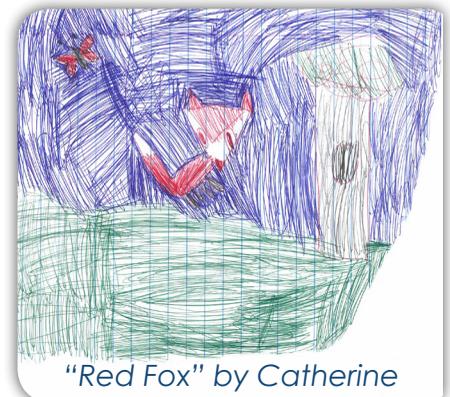
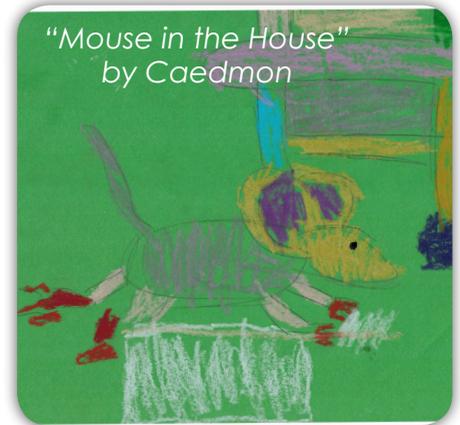
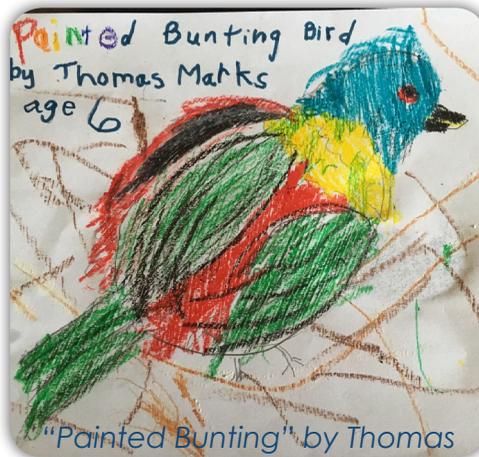
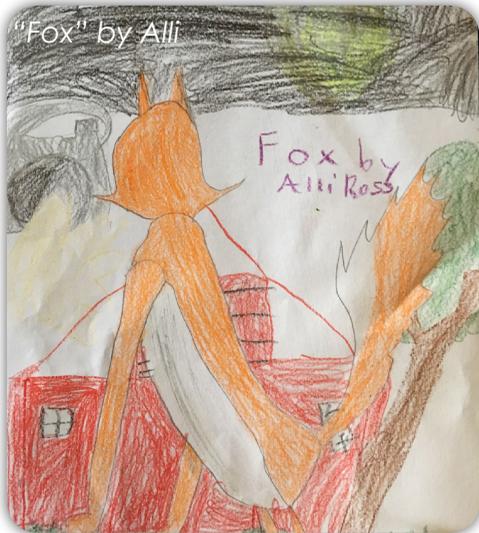
# WILD QUEST

## BE A BACKYARD WILDLIFE DETECTIVE!

Your neighbor says that she keeps seeing wild critters in her backyard. She thinks these critters are a little too close for comfort, and asks you for advice on how to peacefully stop them from coming back to her yard. Can you find what might be inviting these wild neighbors into the backyard? Look for things that might offer food, water, and shelter to a wild animal. Circle what you find!

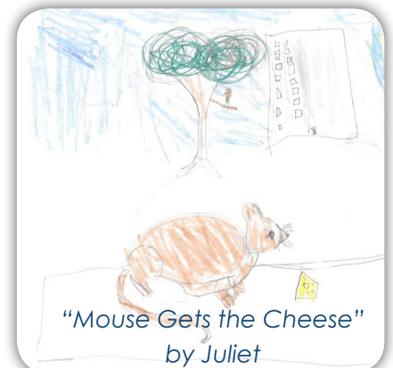


# CREATIVE CORNER: WILDLIFE IN THE CITY



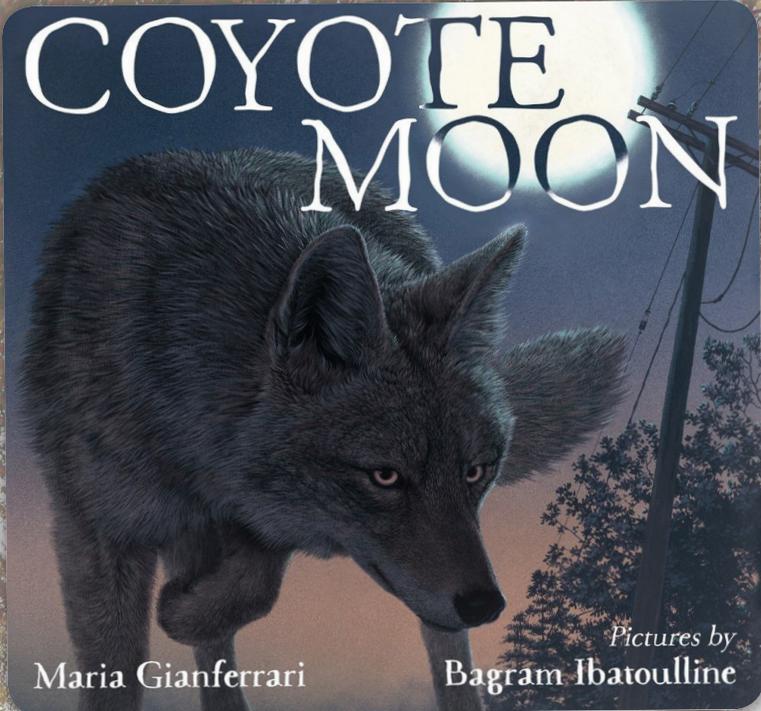
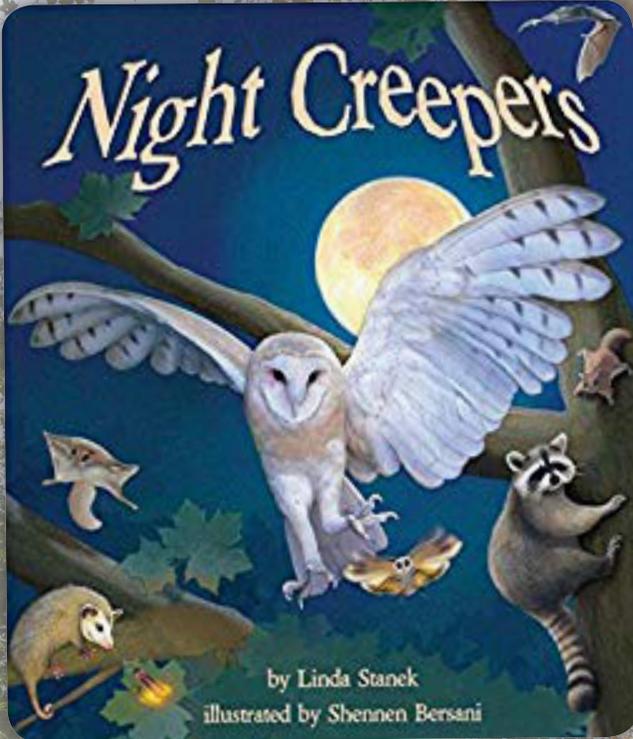
Send us your artwork and writing by  
December 1, 2019  
to be featured in our next issue!

The theme for our winter issue is:  
Winter birds



If you would like to share your creative work, you can send an email to [mary.gannon@dem.ri.gov](mailto:mary.gannon@dem.ri.gov) or you can mail it to the address below.

# BOOK NOOK



## BACKYARD WILDLIFE DETECTIVE CLUES

- Brush pile against the fence
- Open gate
- Dog food
- Trash cans
- Unfenced veggie garden
- Space under the shed
- Open shed door
- Squirrels & small birds
- Open compost bucket
- Bird feeder

Want to read more? **Subscribe to receive *Wild Rhode Island Explorer* online or directly to your mailbox. It's FREE to all!**

Learn more at [dem.ri.gov/wildlifeoutreach](http://dem.ri.gov/wildlifeoutreach)

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