

The Norman Transcript

March 12, 2011

Wild turkey — the feathered kind — is Noble menace

For The Transcript

The Norman Transcript

NORMAN — by Jocelyn Pedersen

Between a wild turkey that has been terrorizing residents and the skunks in the community, folks in Noble are having to watch their step.

A wild turkey has been frequenting the Sonic, Super C, Donut Palace and nearby residences in the area.

“It’s kind of the town menace,” Noble Police Chief Keith Springstead said. “It defecates on and scratches cars.”

Springstead said the police and animal control have actively tried to capture the elusive bird by netting, setting traps and darting it with a tranquilizer. “We’ve been unsuccessful for at least a couple of weeks,” he said. “It hangs out where it can quickly get into the wooded area. It’s not that we’re not doing anything, we’re trying.”

But an elusive turkey isn’t the only wildlife problem in Noble.

“The skunks are incredible,” Noble resident Shannon Jones said. Jones walks with her husband in the evenings. “When it gets dark, they start coming out.”

Jones said she walks along 4th Street from Elm toward Katherine I. Daily Elementary. She maintains that one evening a skunk came out from behind a tree and chased her husband and on another occasion one came out of a tinhorn and started to chase her.

“I’m just shocked about how many there are,” Jones said.

Springstead agreed that there seems to be a large skunk population. He said he recently saw four or five dead skunks on the way from Purcell to Noble not to mention the numerous skunks picked up by Noble’s animal control officer. “Two skunks have been trapped in the last week and a half alone,” he said.

“It sure seems like the ones we’ve picked up are a pretty good size,” Springstead said, noting the animals tend to like to live in draining culverts and under buildings.

Micah Holmes, Information Supervisor at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation said it’s currently breeding season for skunks, which is normally during late winter and early spring. Skunks don’t have many natural predators due to their musky defense mechanism.

“Not everything will attack a skunk,” Homes said. “In the food chain not a lot of things will eat them besides a bobcat or a coyote.” Although he added that given the right opportunity, big snakes, owls or birds of prey will eat a skunk.

Homes said skunks are generally active during dawn and dusk. They are omnivorous and are “opportunistic eaters” that will eat berries, fruits, insects, small snakes, small mice, lizards, young birds and eggs.

Since it's breeding season, there are more mammals killed on the side of the road because "they're thinking about other things besides traffic," he said.

Holmes said the best thing people can do with skunks is to leave them alone because they don't really want to be around humans.

"The old saying is true. They are more afraid of you than you are of them," he said. "They're normally very shy critters. They want to stay away from people and find a dark place to hide during the day."

Holmes suggests the following measures to deter skunks: get rid of things they like to hide in and around such as like brush piles and buildings they can hide under. Remove dog food and waste grain that may attract them.

Holmes said if folks become concerned about wildlife around their homes, they can contact a nuisance wildlife control expert who will come and take care of the problem for a fee. A list of experts can be found on the wildlife department's website, www.wildlifedepartment.com/nco.htm.