

In the 21 years I have lived here, I noticed a coyote pattern. Coyotes yip and bark and make racket a lot at night, so I know they are around, but they gradually make racket farther and farther away, until there is no coyote noise for sometimes a couple of months. I mentioned this to a friend who lives nearby, and he says they follow the rabbit population. That explains why there are always 40 cottontails in the yard lately, since there has been no coyote noise for quite awhile.

Last night, the coyotes showed up with their usual noisy fanfare and 2 of them doing some kind of a duet much of the night, keeping me awake.

Cautious, the outdoor cat, has a pattern as well. I put him in the shop at night for his own safety, so in the morning he is at the door, greeting me happily and wanting out. I let him out and put a bowl of canned food on the ground for him. Then I go feed horses. Cautious eats his breakfast and sometimes waits for me at the barn or sometimes goes up and patrols the yard.

This morning, Cautious was not only not at the door, he was under the bed peeking out at me. I opened the door for him, but he would not emerge, so I put his food in the shop and shut the door. I fed the horses, went back up to see if Cautious would come out. He did, albeit very cautiously, and then I went back to the barn. Cautious came in the barn while I worked for awhile.

Normally he comes to see me and then occupies himself elsewhere with kitty endeavors, but not this morning. He stayed in the barn and did not leave.

Later, we went up to the yard, but Cautious was extremely jumpy and afraid. I have a feeling the local coyotes might have nosed around the shop last night.

I let little Peep kitty out with his harness and leash on (with Cautious anxiously waiting at the door for me to go back outside) and the 3 of us did yard work. Probably, anyone watching would have thought that Cautious was tied to my ankle and that Peep was tied to Cautious. If I reversed my direction I had to be careful to not step on a cat or become entangled in Peep's leash.

Bird noise suddenly alerted me to something, no doubt a snake. A very large mob of small birds made an impressive amount of noise just off our property line to the south. I knew I had to investigate, because if it was a rattler, I was going to actively discourage it. I grabbed my long bamboo rattlesnake smacker and went out the gate.

The bird mob was so big that what they were mobbing had to be 2 rattlesnakes. Normal bird mobs around here can generally be 5 to 8 birds, but I will bet there were 20 birds all atwitter and flitting in and away and were just generally REALLY upset.

This, of course scares me, because for one thing, I can't fly like the birds do to get away from a snake in the brush. I looked and looked on the ground and couldn't see anything. For one thing, whatever they were mobbing was down a steep hill. I had to go off property to get to where the brush was thin enough to see anything and was very startled to not see any snakes at all.

When I saw what I saw, I quickly, quietly pirouetted and headed for the house to get the camera. Peep and Cautious were in the shade on the inside of the fence very close by, since they couldn't get out of the yard. They sure tried hard to keep as little distance from me as possible. Cautious, the cat, is back in the shop and won't come out, and I suppose what I took photos of, plus the coyotes, have him pretty worried.

