

Letters

Editor's note: The North Hills district is a residential neighborhood of Berkeley and North Oakland that borders the Cal campus and a wilderness area. Roughly, the boundaries of the area are Tunnel Road, Domingo Avenue, Claremont Canyon, and Grizzly Peak Boulevard. The following series of emails – dated earlier this week and titled “Our Little Red Fox” – is being republished from the North Hills Open Forum (openforum@northhillscommunity.org).

Our Little Red Fox

**Dear readers,
North Hills Open Forum,**

It seems the little red fox we saw has decided to poop in the exact same place in our yard every night. We noticed it last week – before our sighting of the fox – of strange brown liquidy gunk in our ceramic birdbath outside our 6-year old's window. We cleaned it, washed it with bleach,

kept it empty and placed it back on the yard ledge to watch the birds in the morning. Once again, this time in our clean bowl was a funky mess. Yesterday I washed it with bleach and removed the bowl. This morning, sure enough, there was very soft poop – filled with what looks to be plum seeds – welcoming us in the exact spot. Seems this animal chooses his “dumping ground” and stays with it. Our 6-year old is incensed that our visitor doesn't use a bathroom. How do we stop it/him/her from this unpleasant routine?

*Deborah Layton
North Hills neighbor*

**Dear readers,
North Hills Open Forum,**

When we moved into our current house we replaced a deck, which had been crumbling. The new one added some steps to the South end of the property. Either a fox or coyote has been defecating on the top step ever since, never on any of the others, never on the deck itself. I've

come to believe the animal is a fox since we see them on the property much more frequently than coyotes. And we've been in the house for almost 25 years so I have to assume this is a multi generational thing. Right now the droppings include plum seeds as they always do in July. Neighbors on both sides have cherry plums, which are shedding fruit. I've tried a number of sprays but nothing has ever worked. Now I just go out with a small shovel a few times a month. Fortunately, it's not a heavily used stairway. I've been told it's actually a territorial marking but have come to think of it as a greeting, a neighbor passing through & saying hello, sorry I missed you. A few feet from there, below the deck, there is a place where deer like to hang out on hot afternoons. There's always an obvious hollow in the dirt & deer hair is always visible in hot weather. Again, since the deck was built. And most years in June or July we see a juvenile Cooper's hawk on the top railing of the

deck in June & July. There's usually a nest somewhere close by & it seems to be a comfortable place to perch in sight of the parents but away from most human activity. My advice is to move the birdbath well out of reach & leave it there for a while. That might break the habit. These animals are neighbors & no one has informed them that someone else owns the property. They will use it for their own purposes. We've seen droppings left in other places from time to time. This past winter a canine started doing it directly on top of our Chronicle at the top of our drive. It went on for a few days before I started making a point of going up to get the paper earlier than usual. When I stopped bothering a few weeks later it didn't resume. Another nice thing about life in the hills.

*Rich Fisher
North Hills neighbor*

**Dear readers,
North Hills Open Forum,**
I don't know whether the al-

ways-defecate-in-the-same-place routine is typical for foxes; but I do know it's typical for raccoons. My suggestion would be to either move the birdbath to a different location, or put it away for a couple of weeks. Eventually, your critter will find a different place to dump its load. The consistency will probably change after the plum season ends. Good luck!

*Kay Loughman
North Hills neighbor*

