

JULY 2020

## Close Encounter of the Furry Kind



Wildlife is around us everywhere we go. Even in the city, many animal species have learned to exist in close proximity to humans. An example of this proximity recently occurred on the Bethesda campus, when a den of foxes was discovered under an entrance to Building 30. To create the den, the foxes dug under the concrete slab at the building's foundation, from one side to the other. This provided easy access for the three baby foxes and their parents. The juvenile foxes also created a bit of mischief when one of them found their way through the automated doors of Building 30 and into a nearby conference room. Fortunately, the fox was safely herded out of the building and back into its den. The building doors were adjusted to open only for card access to avoid further incidents.

campus, although they are typically located in the woods behind the NIH Fire Department. It is likely the decreased physical presence of NIH staff on the Bethesda campus made the foxes more comfortable with nesting so close to a building.

Foxes sometimes establish a new den for the purpose of giving birth and raising their young. Once the foxes are old enough to fend for themselves, the parents will leave. Shortly afterward, the babies will also set out on their own. The foxes on the Bethesda campus were estimated to be 3-4 weeks old at the time of their discovery. This is close to the age at which foxes will leave their dens and establish their own territory. It appears this den was discovered after the parents had left, but while the babies remained. For this reason, the den was marked off with "Do Not Cross" tape and the foxes were not disturbed following their discovery. There is a small chance the parents could return to use the den next year, but with greater physical presence of humans around the campus that seems unlikely. The den appears to be abandoned at the time this article was published.

The Wildlife Veterinary Volunteers group was instrumental in protecting these young foxes and the NIH staff. They were heavily involved in all actions regarding the foxes, especially with removing the young fox from the Building 30 conference room. You can learn more about this group in our [Staff Spotlight article for this month](#), in addition to learning what to do if you discover an injured or distressed animal on or off campus. Encounters with wildlife are unavoidable, a result from the simple fact that we occupy much of the same space. However, with the proper guidance, we can ensure that both humans and animals emerge from these interactions safe and healthy.



## TAKE ACTION



### Temporary Changes to NIH Waste Management Services

As we begin returning to the Bethesda campus in an increased capacity, there will be some changes to the previously established waste management procedures. These changes are being made in an effort to prioritize the health and safety of NIH employees and our waste contractors. Read the full article to learn about the specific changes.

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## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



### What Should You Do If You Encounter a Wild Animal?

Encounters with wild animals on an NIH campus are bound to happen to all of us eventually. But how should you react in these situations? It is often best to leave wild animals alone, for their safety and ours. Read the full article to learn more!

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## NEMS TRAINING

**Did you know?** Foxes and other wild animals like deer and geese are frequently spotted around the Bethesda campus. There was even one incidence of a black bear on campus! To learn more about wildlife at the NIH, please visit the [NEMS Training webpage](#) to view a short (20 minute) NIH environmental awareness training video.