

**DON'T FEED THE BEARS, FOXES, OR ANY OTHER WILDLIFE!  
DON'T MAKE THEM PAY THE PRICE FOR TEACHING THEM TO THINK YOUR HOME IS  
THEIR HOME!**



Most Woodmoor residents have read of the recent incident regarding the Mountain Lion found at a residence in Colorado Springs in June of this year. There have been many such cases regarding wildlife and yet people continue to do things that cause these unhappy endings for our wildlife friends. It 's the time of year when our friends are looking for food and fun. Following are two articles downloaded from the Colorado State Division of Wildlife website regarding the dangers of making these critters welcome on your lots. Please read them.

## **A Case For Not Domesticating Our Wildlife**

On Friday, October 27, 2000, a Teller County Sheriff's officer, following advise from the Colorado Division of Wildlife, euthanized a cow elk near the town of Woodland Park, west of Colorado Springs. Following is a brief synopsis of the events as compiled by Michael Seraphin, Information Specialist based in Colorado Springs...

At approximately 11 a.m. on Friday, October 27 the Teller County Sheriff's Office received a call about an elk stopping traffic on Highway 67 north of Woodland Park near the Southmeadows Campground. The caller said the elk had been spray painted and had a bag on its head.

The sheriff's office responded to the call and, at the same time, contacted Tonya Sharp of the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Sharp was on the other side of the county, but after discussing the situation, she asked the sheriff's deputy to euthanize the elk.

A hunter agreed to take the elk and utilize the meat. When the elk was field dressed, bailing twine, a rubber glove and a plastic grocery bag were found in its stomach.

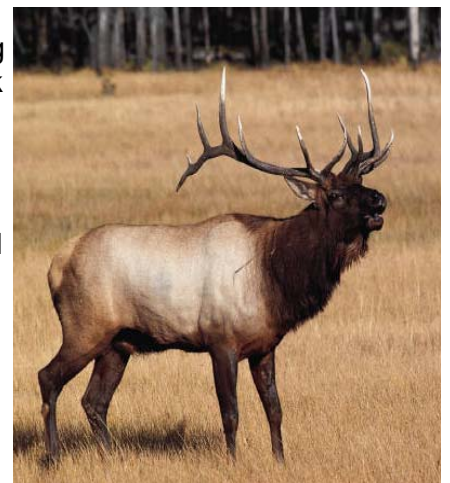
The elk was a year-and-half old female weighing more than 300 pounds. At the time of its death, the elk had what appeared to be pink spray paint on one side. In addition, an orange mesh vest and a cloth Halloween costume were wrapped around its neck.

The story of this elk started more than a year ago when it was "adopted" by Kayo Armentrout and Marsha McCain of Woodland Park as a young calf. The DOW first heard about the elk in June, 2000. Some of Armentrout's neighbors began complaining about a now grown 300-pound elk trampling their property, sleeping on their porches and generally "causing a nuisance," according to the reports. At one point, the elk tried to break into one of the neighbor's houses.

District Wildlife Manager Sharp talked to the neighbors and advised them "to do some negative conditioning," in an attempt to deter the elk from frequenting their property. She suggested removing food sources, (i.e., bird food, livestock feed, hay, etc.). At the same time, Sharp advised Armentrout and McCain to do the same.

On October 9, a Woodland Park family called 911 after the elk attacked them as they were hiking on a pedestrian trail near the Southmeadows campground (in the vicinity of the Armentrout & McCain residence). There is at least one other documented case of this elk attacking a human. It is believed there may be more instances that went unreported.

The DOW made the decision to destroy the elk because it had become a threat to public safety. A 300-pound elk can easily kill an adult, and is especially dangerous to a young child who might not know enough to keep a safe



distance from an unpredictable wild animal. While it is unfortunate the elk was destroyed, the alternative might have been a seriously injured or dead person.

## **Why people should not try to turn wildlife into pets...**

Whenever a person tries to tame a wild animal, whether it is an elk, a bear or a raccoon — the results are **always** bad for the animal, and usually bad for the human, as well.

Wildlife professionals across the nation agree there is a big difference between wild animals that "imprint" on people and wild animals that become "accustomed to living in close proximity to people."

Animals that "imprint" on people are the most dangerous type of wildlife. The elk in Rocky Mountain National Park, for example, are accustomed to people. Although they pose a potential danger, the elk usually keep a safe distance from people and will flee if a person tries to get too close to them. On the other hand, an elk that imprints on people is far more dangerous than even a bear or a mountain lion because once an elk imprints on people, it does not know how to act like an elk.

There are numerous cases of people being killed by deer that they have raised. One of the most recent cases was in October 31, 2000 in Minnesota. According to the report in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, A Forest Lake man was killed when the family's pet whitetail buck gored him to death. In Kansas on September 16, 2000, a 75-year old woman was killed by an eight year old buck that she had raised. Her husband found the woman's body when she failed to return from feeding the deer. The 200-pound buck had gored and trampled her. Each year Alaskan wildlife officers are forced to kill 5-10 moose in and around Anchorage. In nearly all of the cases wildlife biologists report there was a pattern of food habituation. According to Bruce Barley of Alaskan Fish and Game, the moose begins to expect food from every human and becomes aggressive when people don't feed it. In Galesburg, Illinois, a man was killed by a deer he raised as a pet. Wildlife biologists believe the deer's behavior switched because of hormonal changes related to the beginning of the breeding season.

The people who "domesticated" this elk near Woodland Park said they wanted the elk to return to the wild. Although their intentions were good, they did not fully understand the unintended consequences of their actions. Once the elk imprinted on them, the elk was put in a lose/lose situation. It became impossible for the elk to ever return to the wild as a normal, healthy elk because it would be forever dependent on humans.

Just because an elk might not act aggressively at one given moment, there is no guarantee how it may act at any other given moment, as was the case when it chased the family on the hiking trail.

Relocating this elk would result in moving the problem somewhere else. There are virtually no places in Colorado where this elk would not seek out humans.

It is illegal in Colorado to feed big game, and possess or transport wildlife; sick, orphaned and injured wildlife should be handled only by trained and licensed wildlife rehabilitators. Wildlife rehabilitation permits are only given to people who have adequate training and facilities to care for sick, injured or orphaned wildlife in a manner that minimizes human contact and maximizes the chances that wildlife can be returned successfully to the wild. It is not legal to "adopt" wildlife as a personal possession or pet.

**Please, don't domesticate our wildlife! They deserve to be wild and we, the public who owns all wildlife in the state of Colorado, deserve to see them in a wild state.**

## **STATE BIOLOGISTS PLEAD: LET WILDLIFE BE WILD**

The decision last Halloween to kill a Woodland Park elk marked the inevitable end to an incident in which a wild animal became "imprinted" on people, wildlife officials said this week.

"The bottom line is that people need to let wildlife remain wild," said Steve Norris, administrator for the Colorado Division of Wildlife's public services branch. His branch includes the Division's 139 area and district wildlife managers, the field officers who eventually must deal with wildlife that is no longer wild as a result of

their contact with people.

“When people try to ‘help’ wild animals by feeding them or by adopting animals they think have been abandoned by their mother, they put both the animals and themselves at risk. Wild animals are not pets.”



Colorado statutes make it illegal for individual citizens to “own” wildlife, unless appropriately permitted to do so; Division of Wildlife regulations also prohibit feeding big game animals.

“**A fed bear is a dead bear**” is the catch phrase Colorado wildlife officials have used to try to discourage people from making trash and other food sources available for the state’s black bears, thus leading the animals to associate people and food. That association often results in bears threatening the safety of humans and, after two such incidents, the destruction of the offending bear.

The same principle applies to all wildlife including elk, deer and even small animals and mammals like foxes and raccoons, Norris said. That was true in Woodland Park last October. In that incident, a 300-pound cow elk became imprinted to humans as a result of summer-long contact with some well-meaning residents. Division of Wildlife officials began receiving reports of the animal chasing and threatening people. Eventually, DOW managers were forced to order the elk destroyed after it was reported standing in the middle of a local roadway creating the risk of a traffic accident. At the time it was shot, the elk was wearing an orange mesh vest, had pink paint sprayed on its side and had a Halloween costume wrapped around its neck.

A formal DOW review in response to the situation was completed this week and concluded that the wildlife officer acted appropriately in the incident.

“This underscores how important it is for all Coloradans to recognize the importance of learning to live with wildlife in a responsible manner,” DOW Director Russell George said. “No one at the Division or in the Woodland Park community is pleased with how this entire affair turned out, and we need to work together to assure this doesn’t occur again.”

DOW biologists believe the animal had “imprinted” on humans and could not be successfully returned to a wild herd as a result. But, even when wild animals are not imprinted by human contact, people often have unrealistic expectations of biologists’ ability to resolve conflicts between people and wildlife. “It’s a difficult piece of marksmanship to shoot an animal and hit it with a tranquilizer dart in order to move it,” Norris said. “Netting an animal from a helicopter and the other exotic ways to ‘save’ wild animals that people often suggest are even more difficult and dangerous. Even when you can trap an animal, there’s ‘no other side of the mountain’ left to move it to. That habitat is occupied.”

Some contacts between wildlife and people end in greater tragedy than did the Woodland Park incident. In Kansas in September, a 75-year-old woman was killed by a 200-pound, six-point deer the woman had raised since it was a fawn. Her husband found the woman’s body when she failed to return from feeding the animal. Similarly in October in Minnesota, a woman returned home to find her 45-year-old husband gored to death by their “pet” whitetail deer.

Stella B. Thompson of Diamond City, Arkansas, was attacked by a mature whitetail doe deer she had been feeding for some time. First, it butted the elderly woman, knocking her to the ground. Later, with wildlife biologists present, it knocked her down again and began stomping on her with its hard, sharp hooves. The biologists had to shoot the deer to stop the attack.



In June of 1996, a cow elk attacked a woman on roller skates in Estes Park. The woman escaped by jumping off a footbridge into the lake. A few days later, DOW officer Rick Spowart rescued two other women who had been cornered by the same elk.

Each year Alaskan wildlife officers are forced to kill five to 10 moose in and around Anchorage. In nearly all of the cases, wildlife biologists report there was a pattern of food habituation. According to Bruce Barley of the Alaskan Fish and Game Department, a habituated moose begins to expect food from every human and becomes aggressive when people don’t feed it.

There are hundreds of documented cases of deer, elk and/or moose that acted docile for long periods of time, suddenly becoming aggressive. More than 100 years of case studies by wildlife biologists clearly demonstrate danger when wild animals “imprint” on humans.

Despite their concern for animals, Colorado’s wildlife managers always place a higher priority on pub-

lic safety. "As the state population grows and occupies more wildlife habitat, human-wildlife conflicts will increase," Wildlife director George said. "For the sake of wildlife and people, we all need to do our part to minimize these conflicts."

**More information on how to interact with wild animals and resolve conflict with wildlife is available from the Colorado Division of Wildlife website at <http://wildlife.state.co.us>.**

**You can also go to [http://www.wildlife.state.co.us/Education/CoExisting\\_with\\_wildlife/](http://www.wildlife.state.co.us/Education/CoExisting_with_wildlife/) where you will find the following articles and more!**

[Bats and Rabies](#)

[Beaver Problems Growing](#)

[Colorado State Cooperative Extension \(brochures\)](#)

[CSU's Wildlife Conflict Management Pages](#)

[Developing With Wildlife In Mind](#)

["Don't Tempt Them With Junk Food!"](#)

[Don't Turn it Loose!](#)

[Exotic Pets and Prohibited Wildlife](#)

[Fencing with Wildlife in Mind](#)

[Habitat Partnership Program](#)

[Help the Deer - Don't Feed Them](#)

[How to Make Your Outdoor Cat a Happy Indoor Cat](#)

[Living With Wildlife, The Canada Goose](#)

[Living With Wildlife in BEAR Country](#)

[Living With Wildlife in Coyote Country](#)

[Living With Wildlife in Lion Country](#)

[Living With Wildlife in Moose Country](#)

[Newborn Wildlife Usually Better Off Left Alone](#) (press release)

[Too Close For Comfort: Avoiding Conflicts with](#)

[Wildlife in the City](#)

[Wildlife Conservation & Management](#)

[Woodpeckers Begin Springtime Drumming](#)