

# A MESSAGE from the Whitehall Wildlife Committee

SCENERY PHOTO BY PATTI CASS WROBLESKI

**The Whitehall Wildlife Management Committee (WWMC)** has been actively researching and pursuing methods to control the deer and other wildlife populations in our borough. The research subcommittee recently completed the field phase of a survey conducted with a randomly selected group of residents throughout the borough. These selected residents were visited by local boy scouts under the leadership of a scout working towards the rank of Eagle Scout. The results of this survey currently are being evaluated by the committee. Controlling wildlife in Whitehall requires the cooperation of all residents..

- Informing residents as to what they can do to minimize the impact of wildlife is a large part of the WWMC mission. The WWMC community day information booth was well received by residents. In partnership with the Whitehall Library two seminars have been presented. The first seminar in March, conducted by a botanist, focused on vegetation not favored by deer, rabbits and other wildlife. The second, in April, presented by the Humane Society, provided guidance on how to interact with wildlife. Both sessions were well attended.
- During autumn, many gardeners take advantage of good prices on shrubs and trees and bulbs for spring gardens. Try to select plants that deer and rabbits usually avoid. Don't attract deer by offering them what they prefer! Seek the advice of knowledgeable staff at local nurseries. A good source is <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/deerresistance>. Copies of recommended lists are available at the Whitehall Library.
- Protect your shrubs and young trees by using deer and rabbit repellent products regularly (every two or three weeks and after heavy rains). Alternate different repellents since deer and rabbits can become accustomed to a single brand or mixture.
- Rake your leaves and keep your property free of debris and high grass. Don't provide wildlife and vermin with a refuge. If someone is not taking proper care of their property, please notify the Borough Code Enforcement Office.

- Do not feed deer, other wildlife or feral animals. Not only is it prohibited by Whitehall Ordinance 71.6.5 but it is harmful to the health of wild animals. If you see someone providing food for wildlife, please notify code enforcement. Birdfeeders are permitted but keep the area around the feeders clean to avoid attracting rodents. Don't attract raccoons by leaving your garbage cans unsecured. Adding an ounce of bleach to your garbage bag will deter a raccoon from looking for a snack. If you have a small animal nuisance problem and need assistance, contact our police department (WPD).

- Black legged ticks remain active in the fall. Protect yourself and your pets from Lyme disease. Use a suitable repellent when working in your yard or enjoying a hike in the woods and consider immunizing your pets. It has been reported that some dogs in our borough have contracted Lyme disease. Remember, most woodland creatures such as squirrels, chipmunks, and mice, not just deer, are hosts to adult and nymph stage ticks. For more information on Lyme disease, refer to the Allegheny County Health Department or the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention websites. **Report any tick bites to your doctor immediately.**

- There are coyotes in Whitehall. Since they are nocturnal, you may never see one. If you are leaving food outside for your pets, you may be feeding coyotes as well. **Leaving a pet outdoors overnight is not a good idea as it might attract coyotes.**

- A person behind the wheel of a vehicle is the only deer predator in Whitehall. Please be careful when driving between dusk and dawn, especially during the October and November rut season. If you are involved in an accident that kills or injures a deer, please notify the WPD as soon as possible.

- A few residents have wondered if hunting might be a means of controlling the deer population. While it is true that deer can be hunted legally in Whitehall, it is expected to have very little impact on our deer population for several reasons.

Only licensed proficient bow hunters may hunt deer in strict compliance with Title 34, The Pennsylvania Game and Wildlife Code. No firearms may be used in the borough. Hunting in wooded areas must be with the owner's permission and hunters must be positioned at least 50 yards from the nearest structure not on the hunted property or 150 yards from the nearest safety zone (school, day care, etc.). No hunting is allowed in our parks. Hunters cannot shoot into another property, park or safety zone. Hunters cannot drive, chase or bait deer. **If you see any illegal hunting, notify the WPD immediately.**

There are no plans for culls or regulated hunts for deer in our community. Although such an annual activity has had some success in South Park, it would not be considered appropriate in our densely populated borough. Having a cull in Whitehall would be expensive and would have little or no significant impact on the deer population without culls in all neighboring municipalities. Unless it is an annual event, the impact of a cull would be of short duration.

WWMC efforts to educate and inform has had an impact. Residents have reported that changing their property's environment has decreased the number of deer on their property and lessened damage. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the WWMC through the Borough office or ask to attend a WWMC meeting.

