

outside. I look around and lo and behold, about 2 ft. away from the back window is a bear standing up on his hind legs looking in at me. My first reaction is to kick the back door. The bear moves off about 5 ft. and stands up again. My second reaction is to grab my camera and take a picture of the bear. The bear moves off. I look all around to see if I can see him. I see nothing and hear nothing for a minute or two. Then from one of the tents, "Get the hell out of here!" Then I hear bushes rustle and some kind of large animal departs the scene. I keep looking from the safety of the car for the next half hour in hopes of getting more pictures. How-

ever, the bear does not return and I go back to sleep.

I never warned my friends who were sleeping in the tents that a bear was about. I was too interested in getting pictures. I guess I am like the photographer who never helped the animal in the mud. I never told my friends about our big visitor until the morning. You know, I haven't seen two of my friends since we got back from backpacking, which was some 15 years ago. Some people sure do hold a grudge for a long time!

- *Keith Barr*, 40 Richardson Crescent, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4S 4J3



A CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THREE KINDS

KEITH BARR, 40 Richardson Crescent, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4S 4J3

I know that the title does not sound quite right but that's the way it is.

My first encounter was several years ago in the Pasquia Hills. It is the long weekend in May. A group of us had backpacked into the hills and get back to the car earlier than planned. We decide to do a little bit of Sunday driving to see some of the area by car. We have not gone very far when out of the corner of my eye something catches my attention. I look and see a young Moose calf in the tall grass. We stop the car, get out and approach the area where I

had seen the animal. The noise that we make walking through the tall dry grass must be frightening to the calf. We get to the area and find it lying as flat as possible. We keep advancing toward it until we have surrounded it. Still the calf does not move or twitch an ear. Everyone takes several pictures. We stay in the area for close to five minutes taking pictures and still the calf does not move. We go back to the car. We are lucky to see a Moose calf and get pictures. Our encounter could have been much different had the mother shown up!

The second encounter was a few years ago in the Coalfield Community Pasture. I am taking part in a bird survey. The first thing I see is a Coyote hightailing across the pasture. I start to wander across the field, watching for birds. Away in the distance I see some kind of small animal moving about in the tall grass by a large rock. I can't tell for sure what it is, as I only get a glimpse of it now and then through the tall grass. I meander towards this large rock, looking now and then to see if the small animal is still in the area. I notice another object between the rock and myself. I cannot tell if it is vegetable, animal or mineral. It might just be some disturbed grass, part of a dead animal or some wind-blown man-made material. I saunter to within 100 ft. of this object and see that it is a ragged old fur of some kind, and I still see the small animal again playing around the rock. It might be a young fox.

I start to walk towards the rock. All of a sudden the old piece of fur comes to life! Up comes the head, looking at me. It jumps to its feet and gives a bark, turns and runs toward the rock. At the sound of the bark I see three small animals scoot a short distance from the rock and disappear.

The fur is a Coyote that has been sleeping a short distance from its

den. A brisk wind is blowing towards me, therefore the Coyote has not got wind of me. The rustling grass had prevented the Coyote from hearing my approach till I was about 40 ft. away. The small animals are Coyote pups and they disappear into the den. The Coyote ran till it was out of sight. Even if I had had my camera with me, I would have been too dumbfounded to use it. So ends the second encounter.

Now for the third encounter. I was in Prince Albert National Park in late March with a small group of people. We had parked the car in a small turnoff by the Waskesiu River. On returning from a hike along the river I notice a Red Fox sitting at the edge of the road, across from the car. We walk slowly towards the car, not wanting to scare the fox. We get to the car and I take my camera out. The fox is still there. Amazingly enough, it gets up and trots across the road towards us. What sort of fox is this? Is it rabid? No. Just accustomed to people. The fox walks around us and among us without fear. I toss it a few unshelled peanuts which it eats. I take a couple of pictures, we get into the car and drive away. We look back at the fox. It is looking at us, as if to say, "Hey, you forgot me."

So I have had a close encounter with three kinds of animals.



On extinction: "Often, the fact that a species of butterfly is close to extinction can be seen as a symptom that an entire unique habitat is about to be destroyed. The collapse of many of the earth's ecosystems may result in a world hostile, at best, to humans." *Jeffrey Glassberg, Butterflying Through Binoculars.*