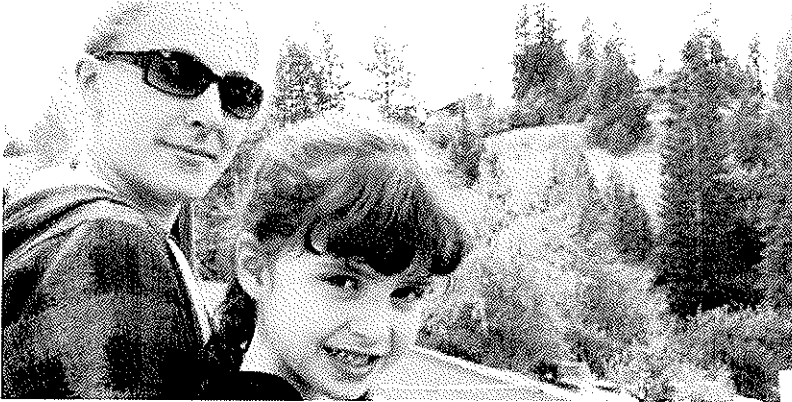


Woman reports wolves in city limits



Brittany Odekirk and her daughter Madison stand on their back porch. The hill behind them is where she spotted the wolves while watching deer. - Mary Orr

By Mary Orr

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A St. Maries woman is convinced she's spotted wolves within city limits.

Two others are sure they've heard them.

While deer-watching one evening Brittany Odekirk caught a glimpse of more alarming wildlife.

"We have a calico deer that is white from the mid-side back and I've been sitting and watching for it to take some pictures and I saw the wolves instead," she said. "I've been watching them now for three weeks."

The wolves run through the field on the hill across from her home at Second Street and Dakota Avenue.

"I've seen them twice on two different days and heard them twice on two other days," she said. "We believe it is a mom and her pups, because several of the howls are more like yips."

After her first glimpse of the young wolf pack, Ms. Odekirk called the sheriff's office to report them. Two and a half weeks later she spotted them again and walked down the street to talk to a parked cop about them.

So far the only response she's gotten was "well if you see them again call us."

Ms. Odekirk also contacted Idaho Fish and Game and they had her file a report of

sighting online.

“It’s very unnerving,” she said. “I assumed if I contacted the Fish and Game they would catch troubled wolves and relocate them, but they didn’t seem to care. It worries me because there is nothing being done and we all have small children and pets and it’s a mother teaching her pups to live in town.”

The field on the hill is owned by Jeff Krieter.

He said he has not seen the wolves himself, but in years past has found evidence of wolves traipsing through the area.

“I’ve seen their tracks up and down the creek that runs under First and Second street up Capital Hill and along the bottom of my field,” he said. “The wolves are traveling up and down the creek. Going through town here is an unpopulated runway they can use.”

He said he believes they are following the deer that travel along the creek, but has not seen any signs of a kill.

Mr. Krieter said he heard what he is sure was a wolf kill in action at approximately 7:30 p.m. Friday.

“I was out picking apples and one of the gals was out saddling her horse when I heard them,” he said. “I heard what I thought was coyotes at first. There was a lot of yipping and then it broke loose into howls for 2 and-a-half to 3 minutes.”

It was wolves calling a kill back up in the draw above Capital Hill, less than a quarter of the mile outside city limits, he said.

“The Simundsons live over there on the other side of the draw,” Mr. Krieter said. “It was less than 250 to 300 yards from their house. Right among people.”

Kim and Julie Schwanz use the field and barns on Mr. Krieter’s property for their animals and they said they’ve never seen any evidence of the wily beasts.

“I heard that there was a spotting of them at the bottom of Second Street following the deer that go through there,” Mrs. Schwanz said. “There are a bunch of deer that come through there, but we haven’t had any problems or animals come up missing. The wildest thing I’ve seen come through there is the cougar that used to come down to Vic Camm Park about five or six years ago, but no wolves.”

Her daughter, Terrin Loe, 21, had returned from school to visit last weekend. She was saddling her horse on Krieter’s property Friday night when she heard the wolves.

“She said it was very eery, and she put her horse away because she was not going to ride with them around,” Mrs. Schwanz said. “She knows the difference between coyotes and

wolves. They were out there.”

They have not reported the incident to Fish and Game.

“You can’t really report anything until you actually see them,” Mrs. Schwanz said. “And she didn’t actually see them.”

Dave Spicer, of Fish and Game, said it is unlikely that the wolves are living in town.

“That’s the first I’ve heard of it,” he said. “Particularly in an area like this with a significant number of people, if there is something going on like that you are going to hear about it.”

For the time being, Mr. Spicer said all the department can do about it is make sure Ms. Odekirk’s observations are documented and wait for additional leads.

If there are additional reports of sightings or if tracks or other evidence of the wolves’ presence is found, the department will send someone out to take a look.

“If it’s a one-time thing we generally don’t go looking for it,” Mr. Spicer said. “If they find any evidence we will come look at them.”

Because the area is owned privately, the agency would have to get permission from all landowners to look about their land for signs.

Ms. Odekirk said she was born and raised in St. Maries, has hunted most of her life and knows a wolf when she sees one. She also said she would rather see something done about the wolves sooner than later.

“I’m just worried it’s going to take an animal or a kid disappearing for somebody to do something about it,” she said.