



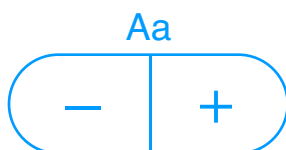
PORT HUENEME

Drought-weary raccoons pester Hueneme residents



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Anne Kallas | Special to The Star

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First it was feral cats, then raccoons.

The city of Port Hueneme has been having issues with animals lately.

At a City Council meeting last month, Port Hueneme residents complained about a group of aggressive raccoons living near the beach and harassing people. One man said the raccoons attacked him and his dogs.

According to interim Community Development Director John Baker, about half a dozen raccoons appeared to be living near the Surfside IV condominiums, close to the Port Hueneme promenade. He said the city hired a contractor, Critter Busters, to remove and relocate the troublesome mammals. The city

spent \$600 on the two-week project.

Baker said the raccoon problem wasn't related to the recent feral cat issue, which came about when well-meaning people started feeding the felines, thwarting population-control efforts by local cat rescue groups.

The raccoons most likely came to Port Hueneme because of the drought, according to Brian Bray, field operations supervisor for Ventura County Animal Services. He said wild animals generally stay away from the beach communities.

"We're seeing an increase in wildlife all throughout Ventura County that we attribute to the drought," Bray said. "Many animals are coming into cities for food and water. Raccoons going into beach areas are not as common as in Simi Valley."

City officials opted against working with Ventura County Animal Services and decided

to hire a contractor instead. Baker said the county's trapping option was expensive and noted that the city is paying four times more than it did two years ago to work with the county agency. Port Hueneme Code Compliance Manager Tamah Figg noted that the traps would have to be checked frequently so that no raccoon would become stranded without food and water in the sun.

Bray suggested that beach-area residents make their homes and yards less appealing to wildlife, especially raccoons, by securing their trash, not leaving food bowls out for pets and closing up dog or cat doors.

“We advise bringing small pets in at night so raccoons don’t go in the yard, attracted by their food,” Bray said. “Raccoons are very smart and handy with their hands. They can open up trash cans. They are very clever little animals.”

Port Hueneme residents with wildlife

concerns can call the city at [986-6500](tel:986-6500). For those in areas served by Ventura County Animal Services, the agency can be reached at [388-4341](tel:388-4341).



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