

Rockin? the corn patch



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By Jim Poling SR.

I'm following the lead of Donnie Trump. I'm withdrawing from a treaty and building a wall.

I have to do it to stop thieving neighbours from stealing my corn. Every year, come late summer, they sneak into my garden at night and strip the cornstalks clean. Not a single cob left for me to enjoy.

I've tried to coexist peacefully with them, allowing them to roam my property freely. And this is how they treat me. Sneaking around at night with their masks, ringed bushy tails and nimble fingers.

So I have withdrawn from our treaty and am building a wall. What else could I do? This is not the United States so I can't just shoot them.

I bought several rolls of poultry fencing and have been busy stretching it around my modest corn patch. Now I am dreaming of the little bandits pacing back and forth outside the fence, whining about being locked away from those cobs of sweet golden kernels.

I have given this much thought because, unlike Donnie Trump, I do not consider the enemy stupid. These bandits, in fact, are quite intelligent.

The Ojibwe people called them ahrah-koon-em, meaning they could do things with their hands, which have long, flexible fingers that allow them to steal anything in sight.

These guys are so smart that some studies show that once they find a solution to a problem, they can remember it three years later. I have a hard time remembering day to day where I leave my car keys.

Back in 1908 the ethologist H. B. Davis found that raccoons were able to open 11 of 13 complex locks in fewer than 10 tries. Also, they could repeat the unlocking when the locks were rearranged or turned upside down.

They also have terrific memories for recalling places where they have found food, and travel long distances to return to those places. I witnessed that several years ago.

A raccoon was at our compost bin, banging and chewing and waking us up in the middle of the night. So I bought one of those no-hurt-?em cage traps, caught him and transported him several miles down the highway.

I left the trap armed and two days later I had another raccoon. He looked very familiar but I figured he was the other guy's brother or some other relative. I transported him down the highway.

Two days later another raccoon appeared in the trap.

?That's the same raccoon,? my wife said.

?Impossible,? I said, loading him into the boat to take him across the lake to the end of a deep bay where the forest is thick, wild and isolated.

We had peace for a few days. Then one morning I got up and found a raccoon in the trap.

?It is definitely the same guy,? said my wife. ?Look at the way he grins at you.?

A heated debate ensued, ending when I said I would prove it was not the same raccoon returning time and again. I took an aerosol can of fluorescent orange paint, sprayed his tail and boated him to the end of the lake.

I figured I now had cleared my property of all raccoons, presumably that first guy and all his family.

Four or five days passed before my wife ran in to tell me the trap was filled again. Another raccoon, this one with an orange tail!

Friends tell me that my fencing efforts will fail because the raccoons will climb the chicken wire or tunnel under it. The prize on the other side is too tasty to ignore.

If they do get in I have another plan. I have read that if you put a portable radio near the corn patch they will stay away. It can't be tuned to a music station, however, because they love music to steal by.

It has to be tuned to an all-talk station, which fools them into thinking that live humans are guarding the patch.

There is no electricity at the garden and I am concerned about the batteries failing. I worry that I could arrive at the garden one morning, and find the batteries dead and the corn gone. Or arriving and finding the corn gone, and the radio playing rock ?n roll.