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5th Grade, First Place
Mrs. Zollinger

WILDLIFE IN FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP

There are many interesting wild animals I've seen in my hometown, Franklin Township, New Jersey. This is one of the advantages of growing up in a rural town like Franklin Township, as opposed to other towns or cities in New Jersey.

A few years ago, there was a wild turkey that lived in our town. The turkey decided to live off Sidney Road, a few miles past our house. He became a famous celebrity in our area with the local neighbors. People had different names for him and we liked to call him Sidney. Whenever we needed to drive that way, like going into Flemington, we had to deal with Sidney. He always stopped cars and made sure to stand in front of them. He would play games like moving in front of the cars – no matter which way they tried to move to avoid hitting him. A lot of times, Sidney would get mad and start to peck at the car. There were many people who got so frustrated when this happened, including my dad. He didn't want Sidney to peck at his car and damage the paint. Eventually, the town started to get concerned about him and the mayor worked with the police department to find a new home for Sidney. I think he is now at a wildlife sanctuary, after they carefully caught him and took him. People were worried that eventually someone would hit him with their car. There is still a small wild turkey crossing caution sign that someone put up on Sidney Road.

There are a lot of interesting birds that live in this area such as hawks. When I was sitting on our back deck one time, I saw a redtail hawk flying above my house. I told my dad about the hawk. Right as he came out, we saw the hawk glide down towards the blue spruce tree in our backyard and, with its talons, it grabbed a baby bird out of a nest. I was amazed and sad at what I saw happen. I've also seen bald eagles flying around our neighborhood and also in town. I think one of them had a nest in the woods in our backyard; I would see it flying above my house and I heard it when it was back there.

There are also many turkey vultures that live in our area. One year we found a dead deer in our backyard. We didn't know how it ended up dying in our yard. My dad was wondering how to get rid of this deer. Then we noticed that the turkey vultures were circling above, and sitting on the roof of our house. We went inside and watched them eat the dead deer. It took only two days for the vultures and other wild animals to not only eat it, but also take the remains to the woods in the back. At the very end, all that was left in our yard were a few bones that the vultures and other animals didn't wind up eating. My dad was relieved he didn't have to drag that heavy and stinky dead deer to the street. We were all glad that animals were able to help get rid of the deer.

There are also many times I see foxes in my yard. I see them running across my yard into the woods. Most of the time, they are running through the yard, especially when they see us out there. But one time, we caught on camera a fox playing with a ball in our yard. This was in the middle of the night when we were all sleeping. The fox was very cute, playing with our

soccer ball and pushing it around. But something must have scared it and, all of a sudden, it ran away off camera into the woods in the back.

I'm so glad I live in a rural town like Franklin Township where I get to see all these wild animals in my yard. A lot of people normally see this on TV on nature shows, but I get to see this in real life. I know there are cool things and animals in every town and city, but I think the wildlife here in Franklin Township is what makes living here very special.