



# NORTHERN PERSPECTIVES

By Bernard Luongo

Whenever things get a little rough around the edges I always take a few steps back to reflect about the property that I work on. It is a vast entity of almost 200 hundred acres with the wildest critters you ever did see. Now we can talk about some of the wildlife that inhabits our property. On any given day our collection of feral cats are sitting motionless at woods edge, hunting up breakfast. It does not take long to see them prancing across the field with a mouse or a mole. They are very good at what they do. I guess they would have to be. Every spring one of them will have a litter in the open section of our pole barn. The noise mixes in well with the nesting birds that take up residence in the rafters. Future breakfast, I'm sure.

We have a large herd of deer and one very large, lucky buck that roam across Field #26 early in the morning. On several occasions a doe will run in front of our utility cart and startle us a bit. It is quite a site being that close to such a beautiful animal. Along the same path rabbits and squirrels are everywhere. In our retaining basins are ducks and geese (though, not so many of them anymore since we got a service in here. It really works). Snapping turtles and regular ones along with what seems at times to be a thousand frogs. But a trophy frog pond is the basin that drains our irrigated football field. Those frogs are as large as a fist. We have to keep our right of ways mowed next to our farmer neighbor's property and this is where our red fox family lives. When we cross paths we are both shocked. Thankfully they take off quickly.

I can easily say I have seen the largest groundhogs on this property than any that I have seen in my life. Occasionally they take up residence by the school and we have to call a service in to trap them. We also have a family of skunks that live under the goat's house by our Ag. Dept. They roam around this time of the year

when we arrive and it is still dark. I'm glad we don't see them in the daylight, that's another problem all in itself. We have not seen any possums or raccoons, but I'm sure they are here.

A bear was sighted across the street in mid-September but he has not make it on to our property yet. Some type of falcon/hawks are always diving at small birds and knocking them out of the sky. That happens a lot in our back fields. Watching the large buzzards dry their wings in the morning sun is always an eerie site. I think our sunrises and sunsets rival those at the shore at times. One of my favorite sites is when the fog drifts across the fields in the morning. There is a clear layer just above the field, a layer of fog, then clear above. You almost expect a pirate ship to float across through the fog. Our cross country track runs through the woods and around a 3 acre pond that is home to small bass and catfish. A few years back we had a couple of beavers. They disappeared but left their handy work. There are also plenty of snakes back there.

There is so much more to all our properties then just athletic fields with all of the mowing, seeding, fertilizing, setting up goals and lining. Take the time out to see the other side of your property. It is alive and beautiful and you all make it that way. It takes the edge sometimes off a stressful day and it is always there just waiting to be noticed.

On a lighter note, in a previous article about running the lines, I extended a perimeter line about 50 feet beyond the playing surface. They did not run off the grid. They stayed true to form and ran the perimeter lines. Experiment failed. Maybe I should of used a circle. Until next time. Keep on turfing.

*Bernard Luongo is Lead Groundsperson, Northern Burlington County Regional School District, Columbus, NJ; and SFMANJ member.*

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