

Fish Ponds Attract Wildlife

The magnetic attraction between wild animals and fish ponds.

By Stephen M. Meyer

Q. I read Aquarium Fish International from cover to cover. I totally agree with you that a fish pond is much more than an outdoor aquarium in the ground. It is also dynamic and ever changing. With a fish pond comes nature, and though I don't care for the Colorado River toads that spawn in my pond, the birds, rabbits and even snakes (yes, rattlesnakes too!) are interesting to watch. I've seen coyotes, ringtail cats, dogs, and even javelina (wild boar) tracks.

But recently, I struck gold. Both magnificent and more than a little unnerving was the first time I opened the back door and came face to face with "Kitty" — our resident mountain lion. "Kitty" is welcome to come drink while I watch (from a distance). Ponds have much to offer beyond traditional aquariums — all you need to do is sit and wait. By the way, no raccoons.

A. Your experience illustrates quite nicely the magnetic attraction of water to wildlife. The sound of splashing water, in particular, can draw animals from very far away. A pond with a crashing waterfall or a babbling brook will have a greater diversity of wildlife visitors compared to a tranquil pool that is contemplatively quiet.

As you have discovered, pondkeeping can be a much more rewarding experience when you let the serendipity of nature have a free hand. I can imagine, however, that having seen your letter, some of our readers are dashing out to their yards to pave over their ponds.

Given "Kitty's" presence, I do not find it hard to understand why raccoons are scarce. I never considered mountain lions as a method for controlling raccoons, but I have no doubt that it works. Thanks for writing. You made my day.