

[Back to Gang of raccoons snatches family cats](#)

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Kenyon Wallace

Pet owners in Richmond, B.C., are locking their doors after a gang of raccoons made off with a family cat — the second such attack this month.

Richard Thibeault says his 17-year-old Siamese cat, Kokanee, was cornered by two raccoons in his driveway Sunday morning and dragged away screaming. He says his wife, Wendy, was woken up around 5:30 a.m. by the fracas and ran outside to see Kokanee being attacked under the family's white GMC Jimmy. She tried to fend off the aggressors with a garden hose, but to no avail.

Kokanee hasn't been seen since.

"He was a stubborn old guy and probably stood up to fight them," Thibeault said of his longtime pet. "But there's no cat that I know that can defend himself against raccoons. They stand their ground. I chase them around with a hockey stick, but they always come back."

The attack on Kokanee comes just two weeks after another family cat was killed and eaten by four raccoons not far from where the Thibeaults live.

Sandra Nixon says it was about 11 p.m. on July 3 when neighbours frantically alerted her and husband Bryn that a pack of raccoons was in the midst of attacking their 14-year-old feline, Arvo, down the street.

"The neighbours initially scared the raccoons away, but when they came to get us, the raccoons returned," Nixon told the *Star*. She and her husband ran out in an attempt to stop the onslaught, but it was too late.

"It was pretty horrifying. They were all over him. There was nothing left. They actually backed away with what was left of him in their mouths."

Apart from some tufts of fur, not a trace of Arvo has been found.

"When we checked the scene out the next day, it looked like ... Arvo was trying to make it back to the house," Nixon lamented. "Unfortunately, it looks like he was too badly injured by the time he made it back to just outside his yard, so was unable to jump up onto the fence."

City wildlife experts say raccoons and cats occasionally spar over territory, but it's rare that raccoons will hunt down a large animal to eat.

"It's breeding season and there are a lot more nests around," said Yolanda Brooks, a spokeswoman for the Wildlife Rescue Association of B.C. "As a result, raccoons are a lot more territorial than they normally would be at other times of year. If a cat is outside and left to roam and it finds a nest, it can be in trouble."

Raccoons, as omnivores, will eat pretty much anything they can get their paws on.

Bryn Nixon believes the implementation of Richmond's new raccoon-proof green bins for household waste is forcing the nocturnal varmints to look elsewhere for food, but he says the city has so far ignored his concerns.

Richmond's Animal Protection Society told the *Star* it doesn't deal with raccoons, which it considered pests, and referred all calls to the Critter Care Wildlife Society in Langley, B.C.

Gail Martin, executive director of B.C.'s Critter Care Wildlife Society, said she has no pity for residents who allow their pets to roam around neighbourhoods, saying cats should be kept in the home for their own safety.

"It's up to the homeowner to be a responsible pet owner," she said. "Keep your cats in and keep food away if you don't want raccoons around."

That's advice the Thibeaults intend to follow. They said their other cat, four-year-old Summer, won't be going outside anytime soon.

"It's common to see raccoons in the daytime now, whereas a few years ago you'd only see them at night," Richard Thibeault said. "They seem to be roaming around the neighbourhood quite a bit. They're getting bolder."



Arvo, a 14-year-old feline, was swarmed, killed and eaten by a gang of raccoons earlier this month.

COURTESY OF SANDRA NIXON