

Testimony by Cynthia Cross before the California Fish & Game Commission August 16, 2017

Hello. My name is Cynthia Cross, and I have lived at the base of Mount Diablo State Park for 16 years. This is my story about co-existing with wildlife

One month before we moved in we build a predator proof enclosure to keep our rabbits and cats safe. We knew there were coyotes and mountain lions in this area and that it was our responsibility to protect our pets.

We used dog kennel panels to make the enclosure, including the roof. Then we used 2x12's over the roof to attach extra heavy corrugated panels that are strong enough for my husband to walk on. We carefully wired off all the gaps where the panels met. We attached hardware cloth to the bottom of the pen to keep our rabbits from digging out and the predators from digging in. Later, we installed 1 foot by 1 foot stepping stones to make a floor, and then covered it with indoor-outdoor carpet for comfort.

The first week after we moved in, a fox bit a rabbit's nose through the lower part of the enclosure, and so we were off to the vet and the hardware store. We picked up more corrugated roofing to make a skirt all the way around the lower part of the pen so the rabbit could not see out, and the predators could not see in.

Not long after that I heard my cat screaming at something. A fox was standing up on a chair next to the pen, reaching high on his back toes for one of my cats. Here again, we had to think like a predator and move everything away from the enclosure.

When I was in animal rescue I met many people who had experienced the challenges of protecting their pets and livestock. It's rarely what people expect. For example, one rescuer had a ringtail cat slip through her enclosure and eat her ducks.

About a year ago, after years of finding deer kills in our yard, hearing of neighbors' dogs going missing, and even a sighting of a mountain lion eating a buck on the golf course nearby, I set up trail cameras to see what was really going on. Right away I was capturing dozens of still photos and videos every night. The sight of all the different animals who share my neighborhood let me know that the work we put into keeping our pets safe was paying off.

On my hikes in the nearby state park I can look down at our development and see how other homeowners are finding ways to co-exist with wildlife. They keep pets and livestock safe by using higher fencing, electric fencing, enclosures, and special lighting.

One of my missions is to talk to my neighbors and friends about the importance of taking responsibility for keeping our pets safe when living near open space. I've lent a hand to build cost-effective, strong enclosures to keep predators out. I encourage you all to do the same.

Thank you for the opportunity to show you some of my photos of my pen and the wildlife in our development. It's great to have even just a few seconds of their wild lives represented in this commission meeting, as a reminder of what we are all here to protect.