

Down at our home in Sharam Point, near Gladstone on the shores of the Murray Harbour, we have watched with interest over recent years the annual arrival of a pair of foxes to the same lair in a pile of off-cut wood only feet from our dirt road.

Each year we have enjoyed seeing a pair or sometimes three kits playing in that area oblivious of our gaze as we pass to and fro in our vehicles. This year has been no exception with the initial sighting of three kits which was reduced to two as time went on. We have seen two more frequently than in previous years, often just running alongside the wheels of our cars or playing together unconcerned by our presence. One a light sandy colour; the other a brown grey.



Then one night, we were awakened by a cry that was almost continuous. Not a bark but a long drawn out howl, just outside the windows of our house and only feet from the basement garage door where our two cats often sleep. These frequent, nightly visits became a regular feature but what was quite extraordinary was that the time quite often was exactly 2:30 a.m. On moonlit nights we clearly discerned the fox moving stealthily from the place to place on our lawn, while emitting this rather eerie and high pitched howl. Was it the vixen bemoaning the loss of a kit or was it some other factor such as hunger or sickness which caused the sound to be continued long after the fox had moved away along the beach. We gained the impression that this vixen, or possibly the dog-fox, was accompanied by the kits as we sometimes heard a snarling noise as if two animals were snapping at each other.

Possibly due to our sleeping through the sound, we have not heard these calls recently. Since these night time encounters, we have seen more of the sandy coloured cub, now almost full grown, as he slips across the road or runs from one place to another.

The most unexpected encounter was Sunday morning, July 15th, when I went to feed the chickens in the small barn close to part of the vegetable and fruit gardens where we grow asparagus and strawberries. There, calmly moving from plant to plant, was this sandy coloured fox with his white tipped brush, eating our strawberries, unconcerned by my presence!

After I had fed the chickens (but not opened the trap door to their outside run), I hurried back to our house. On the way back, I called Ann and our visitors, two English girls from Bath. We returned to find the sandy kit still thoroughly enjoying the fruit, only raising its head and pricking its ears occasionally to see what we were doing.

We do not have very high fencing around the poultry yard but on only one occasion, two years ago, did we lose a chicken to a fox when it got on the wrong side of the wire. Either the foxes have been very law abiding to date or we have been very fortunate in that they have not yet turned their attention to a chicken rather than strawberry menu.

Has anyone else encountered similar experiences with P.E.I foxes? If so, I would appreciate a call.