

The Angry Birder

Dogs and cats do not belong in wilderness areas

By **Kat Avila, Contributing Writer** | Published on LatinoLA: January 25, 2016



So I'm identifying and counting migratory ducks. Suddenly there was this Doberman Pinscher running loose through the pond. I yelled at the idiot dog owner who then said he would put his dog on a leash. I yelled at him again: "This is a wilderness SANCTUARY! There are no dogs allowed!" They simply continued on their walk.

The very next day, in another wilderness area, I had to tell no less than three couples - who had their dogs off leash - that dogs are not allowed in wilderness areas. One woman's flippant response was "A lot of people do it." Such a lame excuse, especially when it comes from an adult.

Where are the mule deer, bobcats, and coyotes supposed to live? Dogs are predators, and their scent and aggressiveness scare off the wildlife in the areas reserved for them. "No Dogs Allowed" signage is posted at the entrances to wilderness areas for that reason. People like to enjoy nature, but a lot of them sure don't want to help take care of it.

Dogs are not the only problem. Cats who have been dumped outside by their owners are another problem. These feral bird-killers are the reason it has become more difficult to see California quail, roadrunners, and other native bird species in Southern California.

Development is inevitable, and with humans come dogs and cats. At least our generation gets to actually see wildlife in their natural environment as I did recently when a bobcat ambled by me on one of my hikes. But I suppose there will come a time when future generations will only see such biodiversity in zoos or on video.

Meanwhile, I'm a 24/7 volunteer naturalist. Maybe it's too late for some adults to learn what the words "wilderness" and "sanctuary" mean, but there's still hope for their kids.

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