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NO HARM, NO FOWL

Geese gone after falling for cardboard-coyote ruse in Hingham

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A cardboard coyote decoy.

HINGHAM - Coyotes and Canada geese.

In a fauna popularity contest, they're not taking home any prizes in these parts.

Heck, they don't even like each other.

And that's precisely what Tom Hastings was counting on.

The Hingham developer had just finished building new youth athletic fields on Beal Street, and just as the grass started to sprout, a hungry, honking flock of Canada geese moved in to make a meal of it. And the birds left a multitude of messes behind.

You could say Hastings decided to unleash the hounds.

But the pack came not from the wild but through the mail. For as much as Hastings wanted his fields fowl-free, he wasn't interested in any foul play.

"We knew we had a problem with the geese and we did a lot of research online," Hastings said. "We found a company, Bird-X in Chicago, that manufactures paper coyotes."



Hastings set up life-size, “photo-realistic” cardboard coyotes at scattered locations on the fields, and once the geese got a gander at the faux predators, they moved along.

“We had to move them (the coyotes) around, to make them look natural,” Hastings said. “Geese are pretty smart.”

Even though coyotes are no strangers to Hingham residents, the decoys’ appearance on the fields seemed strange to some.

The cardboard coyotes “did such a good job, we saw, on several occasions, people walking across the grass to look and see if there were really coyotes standing there staring at them,” Hastings said.

Two weeks ago, Hastings’ company took down the coyotes and turned the fields over to the town, complete with fresh grass and without goose droppings. Hastings would have turned over the coyotes as well, but wind and weather had worn them down. He said he will be glad to let the town know how to order more.

Come spring, the fields will be ready for football practices and baseball games.

“It’s an amazing transformation, a tremendous change from what they used to be,” Hastings said, “and it’s a beautiful area next to the Back River and Bare Cove Park. Not only do you see the geese and actual coyotes, there are wild turkeys and deer coming through the property as well.”

Most of the furry and feathered visitors are welcome.

The geese, Hastings said, are “the only unwelcome guests.”

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