



Librarians vs. raccoons

How raccoons have invaded the library

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The Dean B. Ellis Library sees everything: students cramming for exams, professors looking for research materials and unexpected guests: raccoons.

These critters have been a part of the library's culture for a while now, becoming so synonymous with the building the library staff have accepted the animals as their unofficial mascot.

April Sheppard, assistant library director, said the library has faced raccoon issues for over 10 years. Sheppard said the reason for increased raccoon activity was due to the library's late hours and the building's structure.

"The library building is not a singular building. It's three different buildings," Sheppard said. "So the museum has its own building. The short side of the library is its own building and the tower is its own building."

These three buildings are connected by expansion joints, which are used to connect buildings more securely and to better withstand earthquakes. Sheppard said the raccoons figured out the expansion joints are soft, so they can get inside the building.

Sheppard said the weather often brings raccoons inside.

"If it's really nasty out or if it gets really cold or really hot, we have an increased activity of them trying to come in, so it's been an ongoing battle," Sheppard said. "Fix the holes, run them out, fix the holes, run them out. They have very

dexterous little hands and all it takes is one little crack for them to get their fingers in there and start opening things back up."

Sheppard said she thinks the trees by the library allow for easier access for the raccoons.

"We've talked about taking some of the trees that are really close to the building because they do use the trees to get up to the roof. So we'll try that but I don't know if that's fully going to fix it," Sheppard said.

The library often experiences lulls in raccoon encounters, leading staff to think the issue has been solved.

Frazier Dixon, Facilities Management pest control employee, said, "One time we thought we stopped it, but somehow they're getting in some kind of way on the outside building, somewhere we probably can't get to."

The most recent raccoon encounter occurred Aug. 23, when a raccoon fell through the roof into the library lobby. Another break-in occurred in 2019, which made the news. In this incident, a door was left propped open, allowing the animals to enter.

Sheppard said she once saw the raccoons climbing on the museum side of the building. Dixon said he normally finds them on the second and third floors, where he then sets traps.

"I put a trap in the ceiling and I bait it," Dixon said. "I check it every day or every other day. If I get them trapped, I take them out and let them loose."

The raccoons are released



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DEAN B. ELLIS LIBRARY

Freddie Hawkins (left) and Frazier Dixon (right), two Facilities Management employees, posing with a raccoon caught on March 11, 2022.

into a patch of woods Arkansas State University owns.

To prevent raccoon encounters, the library staff doesn't keep food on their desks. Instead, they keep any food inside their desks. However, that has not stopped raccoons in the past. "We've had one get into

someone's office," Sheppard said. "This was several years ago when one went through the ceiling tile into someone's office and made quite a mess."

Sheppard said despite students eating and drinking in the library, it hasn't served as a huge draw for the animals. "What we found is that by

letting people eat and drink and not making a big deal of it, most students will, on their own, take care of their trash," Sheppard said. "If they do spill something, most students will come and tell us."

CONTINUED: RACCOONS, 4A

Campus and community walk to defeat ALS

BRENNA KELLY

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For the ALS Association, the Walk to Defeat ALS was the biggest event of the year.

Amber Clark, the Jonesboro Coordinator for the ALS Association, said it was critical the events raise the amount of money needed to continue providing grants, equipment loans, virtual and in-person support, advocacy and research to those with ALS.

ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, affects the nervous system. It causes loss of muscle control and gets worse over time.

"We benefited from the ALS organization. Advocates here are super helpful," said Megan Lane, who lost her mother, Melonie Smelser, to ALS a few years ago.

Each year, the ALS Association hosts three Walks to Defeat ALS. The Walk originally started for the Arkansas chapter of the ALS Association in 2006 in northwest Arkansas but has now evolved into traveling all over the state.

This was the second Walk in Jonesboro and the first one on campus.

Clark said this was the biggest turnout yet for a Jonesboro ALS event.

"It is really amazing how much it has grown," Clark said. "We walk today to defeat ALS tomorrow."

One of the many groups that walked was the Community of Christ Church led by Joan Primm. They walked in memory of Will Minor, who died May 10.

The ALS Association provided assistance to Minor and his partner, Steve Nelson. The pair were together for 46 years.

The Brasher Brigade walked in memory of Phillip Brasher, who was diagnosed with ALS in 2013 and died in 2021. This was the fifth Walk for the group, with family and friends banding together to raise money for the Association, whether it be by grilling out, or by lending a hand.

Carly Porter, Brasher's daughter, said the ALS Association helped a lot, as the family "definitely benefited from the loan closets."

Loan closets are a specific type of loaning service, where individuals can borrow equipment and resources needed to manage ALS, without



Photo by Brenna Kelly | Staff Writer

Community members who walked at Walk to Defeat ALS.

having to pay the full price. Porter added how the support group services were helpful. Brasher was also a familiar face for Arkansas State University, as his last job was the installation of the football field's water fountain. Jammin' with Philzo also participated, with their

group raising over \$35,000 for the ALS Association.

Phillip Jackson, the retired president of the ASU System Foundation, was diagnosed with ALS in December 2021.

Since then, family and friends have banded together, with Nicole Frey, his successor at the ASU System Foundation,

and the rest of his old staff, taking on the symbol of massive inflatable dinosaurs to "catch people's eye," said Melissa Livingston, assistant to the foundation president.

CONTINUED: WALK, 4A

Food Recovery volunteer applications now available

Volunteer A-State is partnering with the Food Recovery Network to launch a new program to feed Red Wolves in need, and volunteer applications are live. Food recovery volunteers will take excess food from Acansa Dining and donating it to the A-State Food Pantry for clients to take. Applications close Sept. 22, at noon

Fowler Center to host U.S. Air Force Band and Singing Sergeants

The United States Air Force Band and the Singing Sergeants on Tour will perform a free concert at Fowler Center on Wednesday, Oct. 18, at 7:30 p.m. While tickets to the event are free, they are required for general admission. More details are online.

Blood Drive seeks student volunteers

The Volunteer A-State Blood Drive needs student volunteers to check in donors, distribute snacks and more. The drive will take place Sept. 20-21, from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., in Centennial Hall and volunteers are needed for both days. Students will receive credit for their service hours and can sign up to volunteer online.

BRIEFS COURTESY OF A-STATE DAILY DIGEST

THIS WEEK IN THE HERALD:

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- Print books vs. e-books

NEWS, 3A

- New creative writing club
- Campus Crime

SPORTS, 1B

- Red Wolves win
- A-State's Madigan tabbed SBC Setter of the Week
- Red Wolves golfers confident after strong season opener

ARTS & E, 2B

- New art exhibitions turn heads
- Pop Pick
- Does the world really need a Taylor Swift reporter?

LIFE, 3B

- Club Spotlight: Red Wolves for Red Wolves
- Suicide prevention resources