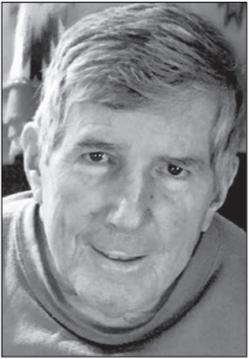


North Country Notebook

# How to handicap a squirrel race? Only Rocky and Bullwinkle know



By JOHN HARRIGAN  
COLUMNIST

**Editor's note:** Mr. Harrigan is currently on an extended hiatus. The following column was originally published on April 18 of this year.

Friends and family know that I relish foul weather, particularly a good snowstorm, so I'm not much for fuzzy-bear replies to complaints. To the collective whine about last week's two days of snow ("In April, for Pete's sake!"), my



WELDON BOSWORTH — COURTESY

Gilford's Weldon Bosworth took this photo from near the top of Cannon Mountain. Much of the Franconia Ridge Trail is in the distance, including Little Haystack, Lincoln, Liberty, and Lafayette. Weldon reported no black flies or peepers

reply was that a lot of people have very short memories. A couple of times, I just said "Move."

This is mitigated, of course, by the fact that about half the people I see and deal with day in and day out are half my age or younger. I bumped into a particularly young-looking officer of the law the other day and wanted to ask him, kiddingly, if he'd started shaving yet.

While it's true that we're more likely to get rain and sleet on either end of winter these days,

snow is hardly a stranger in April. Wildlife biologists in particular worry about late-spring (that means April) snowstorms that can force deer into the yards again when they're low on energy and need to roam for food.

This has happened several times over my career, and I've participated in line-searches in winter yards to count the remains, in an attempt to gauge mortality. This has always been something of a joke, because any remains

aren't apt to be around for very long, given scavenging by coyotes, foxes, raccoons, crows, ravens, and any other creature out there in this eat or be eaten world.

They make quick work of any carcass, as any farmer who's had to drag dead cows out to the bone-yard will tell you. The exception is the hip-bone, and of course the femur. In the dog family, only the wolf has the jaw-power to crush the femur. That's why it was big news a decade or so ago when biologists found a crushed femur in a deer yard in just-over-the-border Hereford, Quebec.

Compatriot columnist Cheryl Kimball writes a nice, breezy column for the Saturday's Features section of the Union Leader, and this past week's topic was "nuisance" animals, and what to do about them, or not.

There really is no such thing as a nuisance animal, Cheryl pointed out, especially when we (the collective "we") keep pushing into their habitat for house lots. Often, she noted, there are ways to live with these creatures, a far more laudatory and pleasant approach than trying to kill them.

Cheryl had a photo of a young porcupine gnawing way in one of her ornamental shrub-beries, but rationalized that it "doesn't deserve to be shot." Now, before you inundate me with mail, I'm well aware of the horror of your dog coming home with a muzzle and mouth full of quills, which for all but the well prepared (heavy leather gloves, pliers, experience) means a trip to the vet.

Her answer? Control her dogs, especially at

dusk and dawn when quill pigs are known to roam. "On the sad occasion of our dogs getting quilled," she wrote, "consider it good citizenship to keep our local veterinarian in business."

I share Cheryl's reluctance to kill creatures, except, of course, the likes of clapboard flies, ladybugs and (ugh) ticks. Still, with even the most appealing of creatures there comes a threshold.

In my former more Clint Eastwood-like days, I maintained a red squirrel kill zone around the house. Now, these are about as cute and neat and fun to watch little creatures as they come, but they are not so cute when they take up residence in the house and begin searching out cupboards and drawers.

At the urging of friends and family, I softened up my kill zone mindset, opting for "Kumbaya" instead.

It doesn't work. This is an old farmhouse, with no practical way to make squirrel-proof. The squirrels have been holding what sounds like the Camptown Races (doo-dah) in the livingroom ceiling. I think they are about to have babies.

Out comes the scoped .22, and the box of shorts.

After three (count 'em, three) surgeries on the same hip I had plen-

ty of rest and rehab to address, and did so at a fine and somewhat off-the-radar facility known to everyone throughout the North Country and the state simply as "The Morrison." Its great hulk of a brick building, with two majorly modern wings, sits atop a hill just west of Whitefield's town common, hence the "below the radar" remark. This becomes moot, however, with construction nearly complete on an extended campus just south of the road to Littleton.

People who work at nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities or just plain retirement homes are blessed with the strength of Samson and the patience of Job. You name it, and they've seen it and dealt with it.

As a guy who once ran three newspapers and a printing plant I did my share of hiring and (hardly ever) firing, and thus I have a habit of rating any enterprise on its people. In this category and many others, The Morrison shines.

*(This column runs in papers covering two-thirds of New Hampshire and parts of Maine and Vermont. Address letters, with town and telephone numbers in case of questions, to campguyhooligan@gmail.com or to Box 39, Colebrook, NH 03576.)*

## SUMMIT BY MORRISON AND THE MORRISON ASSISTED LIVING AND SKILLED NURSING CARE

### Planning for healthcare on a fixed budget in retirement



By SHANNON LYNCH  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Retirement should be easy, but healthcare can make it confusing. Having the right tools to help you navigate healthcare after you have stopped working will make the process easier and allow you to get the most out of your golden years.

Some people are fortunate enough to carry company insurance after they retire, but most people lose all or most of their health benefits. Here is a quick look at what resources are available to make sure you get the best and most affordable healthcare benefits in your retirement.

Medicare, Medicaid: What works for me?

For seniors 65 and older, Medicare is the federal health insurance program you are eligible for, while about five million low income seniors are also eligible for Medicaid, which helps pay the premiums and out-of-pocket expenses that Medicare doesn't cover.

Understanding what is most important and needed will also determine which Medicare plans (Parts A, B, C, D) are best for you. And if

you are looking into a senior community or nursing home, check to see if they accept Medicare or Medicaid. Some facilities accept insurance and others require payment out of pocket.

Both Medicare and Medicaid provide free preventative care services under their plan, including cancer screenings and immunizations.

Medicare.gov is the best resource to start understanding what benefits are best for you. Medicaid.gov will also help those eligible understand what it is covered under that plan.

If you want to speak to someone directly, call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213. You can also consider speaking with a healthcare advisor. Call 1-800-852-3345 to speak with a patient advocate at the NH Department of Health and Human Services.

**Other resources**  
There are other valuable resources available to seniors in New Hampshire to help them calculate the cost of their healthcare and find what plan is best for them:

The AARP website (<https://www.aarp-medicare-supplement.com/medicare-information-guide>) has a free decision guide book that includes detailed information, including pricing and benefits, of plans available to you.

The NH Department for Health and Human

Services (<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/foryou/seniors.htm>) provides links and information on Medicare and Medicaid.

**Be proactive**

According to a Pew Research report, the U.S. healthcare system affords seniors better opportunities to have "more timely access to specialists" and "have a chronic care plan tailored to their daily life" than residents in 10 other major countries. However, that access and specialized care comes with a cost.

By knowing what plans you are eligible for and what benefits you are entitled to before you need them will allow you to better plan for the retirement.

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