

More Raccoons And My Cat Spike!

Spike is a pre-owned cat. When we got him from the humane society in their adopt-a-pet program, his name was Lonnie. I couldn't in good conscience continue to use that name for a cat, so I renamed him Spike. I know that seems more appropriate for a dog, but I think Spike has always appreciated the new handle. As cats go, Spike is a good example of the species. He sleeps most of the day on a warm spot on top of the couch or on the table on the front porch if the sun is out. He chases squirrels in the front yard when the mood strikes him and lays in wait in the back for any chipmunk that might be dumb enough to cross his path. He guards the house when I'm gone and he keeps the garage free from varmints at night. Well, that might be a stretch. Let's just say that he must have a quota for the amount of raccoons that he will allow at any one time in my garage. It gets a little crowded out there when there are more than four at a time ravaging my garage, while he stoically observes the situation from his perch on top of the old refrigerator. He learned his lesson about getting involved in the chaos when a large raccoon almost bit off one of his legs. Spike is an indoor/outdoor cat. When the weather is cold he comes around to the back sliding glass door, meowing pitifully that he is freezing. He must have had acting lessons somewhere before he came to us. Just a few days ago, Spike's summer cousins came to visit him, destroying my garage in the process. I'm not sure where raccoons go in the winter, whether they hibernate or what, but it's unusual for them to visit my garage during this time of the year. If they would only stay a short period of time and leave, I wouldn't mind them hanging out in the garage every once in a while. Unfortunately they manage to destroy everything in their path in their insatiable quest for food. The first thing to go is Spike's cat food dish. If there is any food remaining in the bowl, they fight each other for it, often dragging the bowl around the garage as if it were a dog toy. Spike watches the scene from his box on the workbench. I've sneaked around to the outside of the garage and peeked in through the windows and watched him quietly observing the chaotic scene being played out before him. It's a lot like a scene from Gremlins, where all those little critters find themselves alone in the kitchen and they start tearing everything they find in to little tiny pieces. Snarling, hissing and biting, teeth gnashing as they try to open containers that might contain food, the raccoons have even managed to knock a paint can off its shelf. I have little paw prints all over my garage, through the pet door and down the sidewalk. Last year as a last resort I hired a guy who proudly presented the name of his business on his van, "Critters Be Gone". Unfortunately, while he had a great commercial name, he wasn't much better than I at raccoon removal. After three weeks he packed up his traps and left, complaining that if I had kept my cat locked up and out of his cages, he could have caught the animals he was being paid to catch! In Spike's defense, the aroma from the cheap canned cat food that was used for bait was very tempting. It's hard to keep him out of the cage when he knows that gourmet heaven is just a few feet away, tucked in the back of a wire cage. Last night for the first time, I had a good look at one of the raccoons that was tearing up my garage. It was the largest coon I've ever seen in my garage. I opened the door and there he was staring at me, one paw in the five gallon bucket that holds Spikes cat food. After stuffing a handful of Meow Mix into his mouth he sprinted to the pet door and was gone. For several years now I've had a raccoon problem in the spring and summer when families of them would invade my garage. Now it looks as if I'm to be blessed with the winter version of "Animal Capers".

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