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Animal traps found in Iroquoia Heights

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The Hamilton Spectator

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Two large, camouflaged pit traps have been discovered in the Iroquoia Heights Conservation Area.

A Hamilton Conservation Authority staffer dismantled one of the traps just 30 metres behind residents' back yards about three weeks ago.

Shortly after, local residents spotted another one in the area, which has been embroiled in controversy over suspected native hunting since last fall.

Word of the camouflaged pits surfaced before the first deer management advisory committee meeting last night, where more than a dozen community representatives gathered to map out the task force's role.

Shari Faulkenham, the authority's ecologist, said yesterday she was conducting a deer survey in the urban conservation area when she spotted a deer bone.

When she crouched down for a closer look, she spotted a camouflage net under a litter of leaves nearby.

"They lay in sticks, plywood, sticks to hold up the net and threw in a leaf litter over it," she said, adding she didn't know if it had been set up to trap deer or other animals.

"You could probably break something (if you fell in)," she said. "You could get bruised, broken, or you could get impaled by a stick."

Faulkenham said the pit was at least a metre deep and about two metres by two metres.

Last week, the conservation authority received reports of another camouflaged pit from the Animal Alliance of Canada, an animal-protection group.

Yesterday, the alliance's director, Liz White, said she received e-mails and photos from two area residents about two weeks ago concerning a camouflaged pit and shotgun bullet casing about six metres apart in the urban conservation area.

White sent the information and photos to city council members, the mayor and the conservation authority, asking officials to stop "whatever hunting" was happening at Iroquoia Heights.

"If this is happening, there seems to be a public safety issue that needs to be addressed," White said.

But the authority's general manager, Steve Miazga, said yesterday reports had to go to police and ministry conservation officers.

Faulkenham said the authority is still waiting on the residents to tell them where the second pit is located.

The next step would then be contacting police and having it dismantled, she said.

Staff did not close the conservation area after her discovery because they did not want to "overreact" before getting more information, Faulkenham said.

"We are trying to think about the public here and safety ... It could be anybody (who made the pit)."

Faulkenham brought the camouflage net she found to the advisory meeting last night, but, about two hours into the meeting, the reports of traps had not been brought up.

Councillor Lloyd Ferguson, who attended the meeting last night, said his ward was "extremely divided" about the Iroquoia Heights issue.

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Ted Brellisford/The Hamilton Spectator
Two animal traps - pits a metre deep - have been found in the Iroquoia Woods area. One of them was just 30 metres from a back yard.