

FRIDAY EXTRA!

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Weekend Edition



THE ELK WHISPERER

Hammond woman delights in giving treats to the beasts

By **DERRICK DePLEDGE**
The Daily Astorian

Warrenton Police Chief Mathew Workman did not mention her by name. But when he told the City Commission in February about a woman who feeds elk from her car window, everyone knew it was Connie Loomis.

The 76-year-old caregiver in Hammond is not exactly incognito. She shared the photos she took of elk snacking on fruit with the police department and the newspaper. Her email address is a play on "elk whisperer" and her birth year.

Loomis quibbles with the police chief's description of her driving into the center of a herd and passing out treats. She says the elk come to her, most of the time.

"They come right to my car," she explained. "They like apples and pears. And they also like honeydew melon."

"If I didn't think I'd get a great big fine I'd probably buy them a bale of alfalfa."

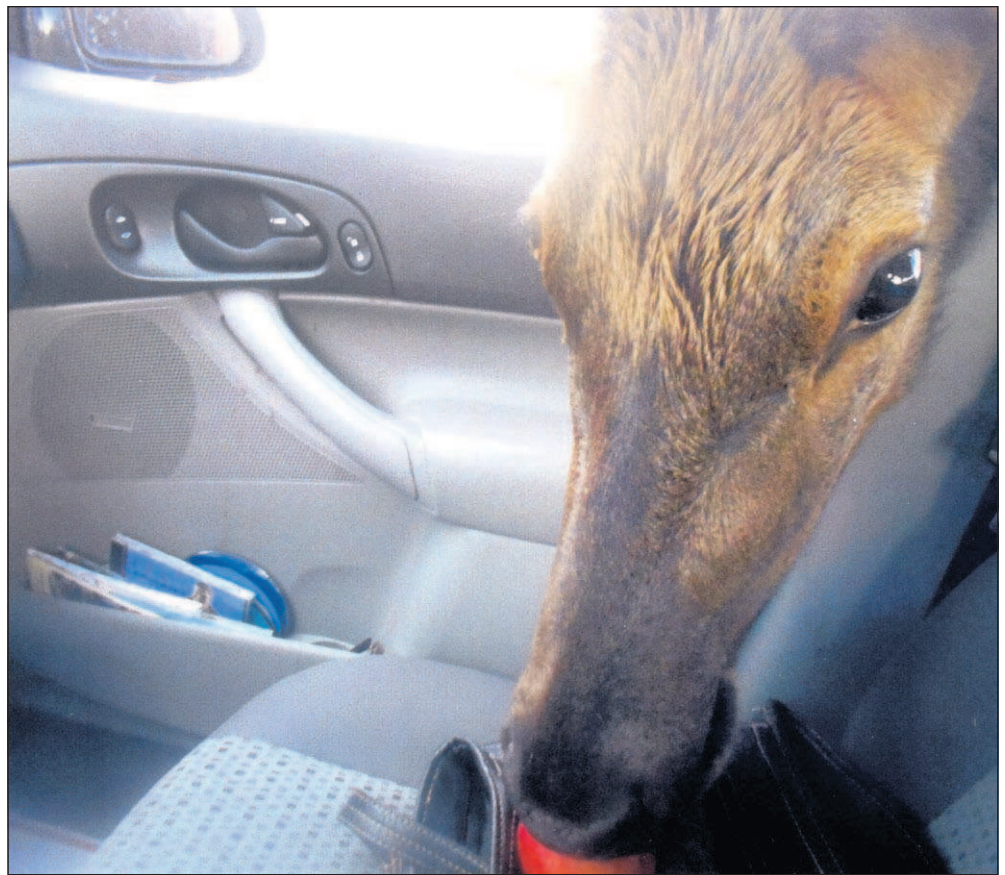
Her fun will soon end. The City Commission approved an ordinance Tuesday night prohibiting people from feeding wildlife, a direct response to Loomis and others who feed the North Coast's robust elk population. Violators could face fines of up to \$250.

Wildlife experts warn against feeding the animals. There were several reports last year of aggressive elk in residential neighborhoods. The elk could also be at risk if they associate people with food and become too domesticated.

Loomis says she has never had a problem or felt in any danger. "They nuzzle," she said. "They nuzzle right at me through the window."

She does not intend to continue feeding the elk, though, on account of the fines.

"No, I really don't think I will," she said. "If they're on my back porch, I may give them a treat."



Connie Loomis/Submitted Photos

Connie Loomis, who lives in Hammond, feeds the elk. A new city ordinance in Warrenton prohibits people from feeding wildlife, with fines of up to \$250.

