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A Blog About Energy and the Environment

October 24, 2012, 7:40 am [34 Comments](#)

Learning to Live With Urban Coyotes

By [JOSIE GARTHWAITE](#)



Kevin Moloney for The New York TimesJay Stewart, an independent nuisance wildlife trapper, in 2009 with one of the small-caliber rifles he uses to selectively shoot coyotes in the affluent Denver suburb of Greenwood Village. He was hired by the city to trap or shoot coyotes that do not seem afraid of humans.



Only a few decades ago, Wile E. Coyote in hapless pursuit of Road Runner may have been the most readily conjured image of *Canis latrans*, the coyote, for most city dwellers. But increasingly, residents of urban and suburban areas are having firsthand experience with coyotes in their own yards, parks and neighborhoods.

Coyotes now inhabit every state in the country except Hawaii, eating mostly rodents, rabbits, and fruit while making their homes between apartment buildings and in industrial parks and popular recreation areas in metropolitan areas from New York City to Chicago to San Francisco. [Recent research](#) suggests that coyotes could prove to be just the first of a wave of larger carnivores — bears, cougars, and wolves — moving into residential areas.



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

said, suggest that attitudes toward wolves over an eight-year period turned more negative in 2009. The data show increased fear of the wolves, a greater sense of competitiveness with them in the woods, and greater approval for the state to kill wolves for purposes of depredation and for a public hunting season.

Not surprisingly, coyote incidents reported close to home, if not experienced firsthand, can have at least intrigued: ‘I want to see what their behavior is, and where they live, and what they eat, and what they do,’ he said.

“But if your pet gets bitten, or your cat gets killed and you find parts of it on your front lawn in the middle of the community,” he said.

Mr. Treves said he had witnessed that kind of shift in sentiment very close to home. In Madison, Wis., he has lived for at least 15 years. “We hear coyotes and their pups every year, and it’s a noise we love,” he said.

But in 2009, coyotes attacked two dogs on the west side of town. “It caused quite a bit of alarm in the community to get a handle on what was going on in my own community,” Mr. Treves said. For nearly a year after, he was leaving more lights on in the yard after dark and making sure no food was left outside to attract coyotes.

“People are coming into contact with coyotes in a setting that’s novel,” he said. “And novelty often breeds fear.”

“Go an hour outside Madison, they’re used to seeing coyotes and there wouldn’t be an outcry,” he said.

According to a [paper](#) by Cornell researchers who surveyed residents of four Westchester towns, “residents were aware that coyotes could harm pets” at the time of the first survey in the autumn of 2009, and during summer 2010.”

The fall after the attacks, nearly half of respondents in each of two study areas (Somers and Yorktown Heights, and Greenburgh, two more densely populated towns along the southwestern edge) expressed concern about coyotes. They had expressed that sentiment.

More than a year after the attacks, the worries had not subsided. The community’s concern about coyotes had elevated to “a new norm.”

“The reality is coyotes are incredibly adaptable, intelligent, resilient animals, and they have learned to live with them.”

**A version of this article appeared in print on 10/30/2012, on page D3 of the NewYork edition with the headline: As**

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