

Who are we?

The Bow Valley WildSmart program is a proactive conservation strategy that encourages efforts by communities to reduce negative human-wildlife interactions. **Learn more at www.wildsmart.ca**

This monthly editorial is an opportunity to explore some of the challenges we face in the Bow Valley as we strive to coexist with wildlife. **If you have any comments, questions or topic ideas, please send them to info@wildsmart.ca.**



Do Canmore's Coyotes have a people problem?

The day I saw a coyote at the cross walk, stop, and look both ways and cross the street, I knew we had a problem and so did they. In 2008 we had three incidents of coyotes nipping children and numerous calls of sightings and incidents of coyotes approaching residents, children and pets. Officers inevitably destroyed several coyotes in an attempt to remove the 'rogue' coyotes and provide evidence to the health officials for rabies testing.

It is unusual for coyotes to attack or bite people. Such behaviour in coyotes may be suspect enough to indicate health issues. When a wild animal

makes physical contact with a human, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency requires that the animal be tested for rabies and to do so must kill the animal to test the brain. The coyotes in Canmore that were tested did not have rabies and some experts concluded that these animals were likely habituated and may have been seeking food based on prior hand feeding.

How did this wild animal go from being shy and elusive to nipping children and walking amongst us in the streets? The answer is simple. We fed them, we ignored them instead of scaring them away and they started to see us not as a threat but as a source to obtain food.

The reality of our situation and theirs is that wildlife live here and so do we and coexistence with them is going to require a bit more work on our part.

What you can do to coexist

If you see a coyote in a human use area, or are approached make noise to scare it away. It is also well advised by coyote experts to stop feeding the rabbits, as the coyotes are not only eating them but the food left out for them. All possible attractants such as garbage and pet food should be properly stored inside or in bear proof bins. Dogs need to be walked on leash and supervised when in your yard. Both dogs and cats can be an attractant for coyotes.

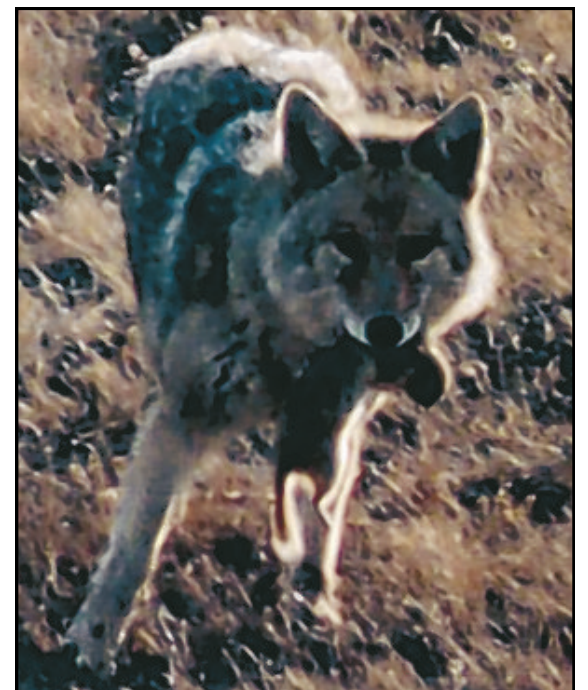


These are all easy things we can do to coexist with coyotes and keep them out of trouble with humans. Otherwise, coyotes will continue to view humans as a food source, and will likely be destroyed as a result of their food seeking behaviour.

Let's be the WildSmart community we know we can be, by making our neighbourhoods safe for children to play in and giving coyote a chance to live here too.

Be Coyote Smart

- If concerned about encountering an aggressive coyote, keep a deterrent handy (walking stick, air horn, whistle, pepper spray)
- If a coyote approaches you, make yourself look as large as possible, shout at the coyote and maintain eye contact.
- If the coyote continues to approach don't run or turn your back on the coyote, continue to shout, wave your arms and slowly move to safety.
- Parents should pick-up small children and carry them.
- Children should not be left unsupervised when outdoors.
- If a coyote is acting aggressively or has displayed aggressive behaviour towards people or pets, call 403-591-7755.
- For all public safety emergencies, call 9-1-1.



Photos courtesy of Dianne Whittner

Special Thanks

to Cliff Hanson for his deer & elk photos in our January 2009 editorial.



Call 403-591-7755
to report a bear, cougar
or aggressive elk

Cool Coyote Facts

Did you know that in the early 1900's European settlers viewed large predators as a threat, and sought to extirpate them. Consequently, wolves and many other predators were eliminated from the Yellowstone Ecosystem. Not only did coyotes survive this persecution (an impressive feat in itself), but subsequent generations of coyotes increasingly resembled wolves both in looks and behaviour. They grew larger, their pack size increased, and they even had alpha male and alpha females leading the pack! A lack of wolves and an abundance of prey likely enabled this profound change. Once Canadian wolves were relocated to Yellowstone National Park in an effort to re-introduce the species, the coyotes morphology and behaviour returned to its original state.