

Coyotes In Lake Ridge

Continuing from last month's discussion of habituation, any habituated wildlife should be regarded as potentially dangerous.

Yes – there are coyotes in Lake Ridge. More specifically, these are Eastern Coyotes or Coywolf hybrids which are noticeably larger, with more wolf-like skulls, jaws, and teeth. A 2011 study found that the Northern Virginia coyotes/coywolves probably migrated south from New England along the Appalachian Mountains. Virginia hybrids are most likely a combination of northeastern coyote-wolf hybrids, which are slightly bigger and more wolf-like, and non-hybrid coyotes coming through Ohio. And, they are here to stay.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2011/11/111107-hybrids-coyotes-wolf-virginia-dna-animals-science/>

Coyotes prey on pets, especially cats and small dogs. They do attack and carry dogs and cats out of fenced yards. If there is a feral cat population in your neighborhood, it will probably disappear. Coyotes also prey on fawns and foxes. Archers have observed coyotes stalking fox in Lake Ridge.

Coyotes do attack humans and should not be considered harmless. However, the risk can be minimized. Several major urban areas have experienced coyote attacks on pets, children and adults. A 2004 report verified 48 reports of coyotes attacking children and adults in southern California between 1998 and 2003. The authors summarized the progression of aggressive coyote behavior leading up to attacks on humans as follows:

1. An increase in observing coyotes on streets and in yards at night;
2. An increase in coyotes approaching adults and/or taking pets at night;
3. Early morning and late afternoon daylight observances of coyotes on streets and in parks and yards;
4. Daylight observances of coyotes chasing or taking pets;
5. Coyotes attacking and taking pets on leash or in close proximity to their owners; coyotes chasing joggers, bicyclists, and other adults;
6. Coyotes seen in and around children's play areas, school grounds, and parks in mid-day;
7. Coyotes acting aggressively toward adults during mid-day.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/vpc21/1/>

The key to mitigating this threat is preventing habituation. There is a strong correlation between coyote habituation and attacks. In southern California, an area with the highest concentration of coyote attack incidents in the United States, a study found human-related food constituted as much as 25% of coyote diets in areas with high human population densities. In contrast, a similar study in the Chicago metropolitan area, an area with a large population of coyotes but no incidents of coyote attacks to date, human-related food was found in less than 2% of coyote scats analyzed.

https://urbancoyotereseearch.com/sites/default/files/WhiteandGehrt_CoyoteAttacks.pdf

The major cause of habituation is promoting human-wildlife familiarity; e.g., feeding.

- Avoid feeding pets outside. If necessary, remove bowl and leftover food promptly. Do not leave it out overnight.
- Do not compost meat or dairy products unless the compost is fully secured.
- Remove fallen fruit from the ground.
- Keep trash in high-quality containers with tight-fitting lids, placing the containers curbside the morning of collection.

The time to prevent habituation is now. Archers have not seen dog or cat remains, but a coyote will not leave much. Several persons have commented that more pets are “missing”