

Present for meeting

Dana Stangel, Animal Issues Representative
Emma Lemcke
Steve Boudreaux
Dave Syring
Lilliana Sanchez

Kathy Delsen (sp?)
Emily Gardner
Tim Gardner
Betty the dog

Old Business

RACO Program (Reserve Animal Control Officer Program) still not moving forward

Living with Coyotes

Presented by Dana Stangel, with materials from Project Coyote

Coyotes are opportunistic and are very good at cleaning up the environment. Where you don't have coyotes, you have rats.

Coyotes are becoming urban – they don't just live in the wild, they are now thriving in towns and cities. They are very successful in urban environments, as they have good food sources and few to no predators. They are even reproducing in cities, a sure sign that they are living comfortably. Ohio State has been doing a 5-10 year study on coyotes that live in Chicago, and they have found some very fascinating evidence that the coyotes have made themselves right at home, sometimes within 100 feet of people who have no idea they're there. They can even cross Lake Shore Drive successfully – a major feat on such a large and fast Chicago road. (more <http://researchnews.osu.edu/archive/urbcoyot.htm>)

Coyotes are naturally curious animals (like their relative, the dog). They may not always feel emboldened to act, but they are interested in other animals and people.

It is a bad idea to feed coyotes. "A fed wild animal is a dead wild animal." When circumstances change, the animal may no longer be able to sustain itself. Further, feeding smaller animals will bring larger animals to the feeding stations. If you are feeding a cat, you are likely also drawing in other larger animals like raccoons, coyotes and bobcats.

Even if you would like to see wild animals in your habitat, you are not doing them a favor by feeding them. In Dana's work at the Wildlife Waystation, she has noticed that hazing coyotes is less successful due to wild animal feeding. (Hazing an animal means scaring it away – loud noises, stomping, yelling, throwing objects, etc. This ensures the wild animal keeps its distance.) In this case, when volunteers threw rocks toward coyotes to scare them, rather than running away from the rocks, the coyotes would run to the rocks, as if they were treats. This is a very dangerous situation brought on by someone's desire to feed these wild animals. Again, a FED wild animal is a DEAD wild animal.

Please keep your pets indoors at night, and keep cats indoors at all time. If you would like to give a cat outdoor time, keep it in an enclosed catio. It is understood that some people don't want to change their lifestyle, but it's dangerous to leave your animal companions out at night. There is no worse way to learn that lesson than by losing your beloved pet to a predator.

There are also other dangers for animals left to their own devices – many people use poisons to combat pests like rats – if a cat or a dog ingests a poisoned rat, they can be injured or killed as well. Unsupervised outdoor time can be very dangerous. (Outdoor cats only live 1-3 years, while indoor cats can live to be over 20.)

Feeding wild animals can be dangerous to the wild animals as well. Coyotes get used to being fed in places like Griffith Park, but eventually someone who gets too close gets bitten, and then authorities come in and kill any coyotes they find – the coyotes become victims of *our* carelessness.

Please remember that coyotes would NOT be so bold if they were not fed. They should fear us, even if they are curious animals. We can prevent future dangerous scenarios by hazing them and by not providing food near our homes. (That means avoiding feeding them *and* their prey.) Wild animals do not want to be around people; they especially do not want to be near children and schools – the noise and the chaos is scary to them.

Coyotes are being affected by the drought, as are all animals, plants, and people in Southern California, but it IS illegal to shoot coyotes. Removing one from its environment will only encourage more to take its space and to breed to refill a gap. Most people who are upset by having coyotes in their neighborhood do not understand them – the best way to save them is to educate those around us.

If you are worried about wild animals in your yard, there are a number of things you can do to keep your household animal-free. Bring in all food in at night. Set up motion sensor lights or sprinklers. Put rollers at the top of fencing (so animals cannot grip when climbing). Try turning on a battery-powered radio or light in a trouble-area, and by the time the batteries have died, the pest should no longer be trying to go there.

Hazing is important if you come across a coyote. DO NOT USE BB GUNS. Make lots of noise. Use an airhorn or other noisemaking tools. A taser stick will make loud crackling noises that are also scary. The goal is to spook it, not injure it. Do not use pepper spray (which will also hurt you and your company).

For more information on coexisting with coyotes, please check Project Coyote's website.
<http://www.projectcoyote.org/>