

Coyotes in the city — tips on being careful



**Michele
Kading**
COMMUNITY
CORRESPONDENT

ST. VITAL

In the last two decades, coyotes have become common in many large cities. Encountering one of these “ghosts of the plains” can be a magical experience.

Coyotes are naturally wary of people. Weighing about 20 kilograms, they are bigger than foxes but smaller than wolves. According to Dr. Stanley Gehrt of Ohio State University, their size makes them ideal predators. They are small enough to meet their energy needs by feeding mainly on small rodents and rabbits — supplemented with insects, fruit, garbage and carrion. If necessary, they are large enough to work together to kill a deer.

Here are some tips for living with coyotes:

- When you are outdoors enjoying the trails, do not let your dog chase, harass or corner a coyote. Keep your dog on a leash. To a coyote, a small dog is a potential meal and a large dog is either a possible mate or a threat. Pick up dog waste to dispose of in the garbage. Dog droppings that are left behind will attract other dogs — including coyotes.

Don't toss food scraps beside the trail. They will attract animals that coyotes hunt.

- Discourage coyotes from visiting your yard. Clean up spilled food around bird-feeders. Put food scraps in garbage cans or “digesting” composters. Don't leave pet food outdoors. Pick up fruit from under trees. These items can attract rodents which attract coyotes. Do not feed the deer. Coyotes will track deer to regular feeding stations. Keep cats, dogs, and children indoors at night when coyotes are most active.

- Never approach a coyote, its den or its pups. Coyotes will protect their homes and families.

- Never feed coyotes. Doing so teaches them to approach other people. This unnatural behaviour is seen as an indication of illness or aggression. It never ends well for the coyote.

- Teach your family what to do if a coyote gets too close for comfort. Make yourself look bigger by waving your arms above your head. Yell “GO AWAY” and slowly back away. Don't turn your back or run. Use “hazing” techniques to encourage the coyote to run away. Rattle your keys. Snap open an umbrella. Bang pot lids. Spray the coyote's hind end with a hose. Or throw something toward — not at — the coyote. The idea is to startle the coyote without hurting it or



Flickr Creative Commons

The Seine River provides important habitat for wildlife — including coyotes.

making it angry.

Most importantly, respect and admire these adaptable and intelligent predators from a safe distance.

Michele Kading is a community correspondent for St. Vital and the executive director of Save Our Seine (saveourseine.com)