

Mississauga News – Animal Talk

COYOTES MAKE A COME BACK

Coyotes have long since inhabited the cities of southern Ontario and have been known to frequent many urban areas of Mississauga including private property, park lands and school grounds in search of rodents, their natural prey.

Over the past few years a mange pandemic has all but wiped out our Mississauga fox populations and has severely depleted our coyote populations. Sarcoptic mange is a skin disease that causes rapid hair loss, itchiness and left untreated eventually weakens the animal's immune system. Mange is highly treatable, however, treatment is rarely an option for wild animals and many succumb to starvation and death as they become too weak to hunt effectively.

Nobody really knows how badly the wild canine populations were affected, however, what we do know is that during the mid 90's Animal Services was inundated with reported sightings of coyotes and foxes throughout the City. From the year 2000 forward reports of coyotes and fox sightings dropped to nil and the complaints about nuisance rodents and rabbits skyrocketed throughout southern Ontario and the GTA.

For the first time in many months reports of active coyotes have been reported in Mississauga and surrounding areas. Logically, it only makes sense that once *mother nature* completes her balancing act we can expect the coyote and fox populations to bounce back.

Coyotes do not generally pose a threat to human safety but we find that many residents have concerns and questions about coyotes in the City.

What You Should Know About Coyotes

- They are intelligent, highly adaptable and a good source of rodent control.
- They are very active at dusk, dawn and during the night.
- Coyotes are non-confrontational and frightened of people but curious and like to watch or follow from what *they* consider a safe distance.
- They startle easily with a loud noise or sudden movements.
- They consider outdoor pets prey unless they are attached to a human by a leash.
- Their main diet consists of mice and rabbits; they will prey on cats and in a few cases have been suspected of taking small dogs from their backyards after dark.
- Coyotes are too intelligent to live trap, leg holds are the only effective means of capture.
- Coyotes cannot be relocated as it is against Provincial Law and it is not considered effective or humane. Coyotes have been shot, trapped and persecuted for centuries yet they continue to thrive throughout North America.

Tips to Coexist with Coyotes

- Never Feed or Encourage a Coyote – feeding a wild animal is a death sentence, once a wild animal loses its fear of humans it can no longer coexist safely in society with humans.
- Make sure you are not leaving garbage in an area where it can be consumed by wildlife.
- Bird feeding attracts the animals that prey on birds such as foxes, coyotes, free roaming cats, hawks and owls.
- Keep pets on leash and cats indoors, particularly during the hours between dusk and dawn.
- If you observe coyotes in your vicinity use this opportunity to scare them with a sudden movement or a loud noise, this will reinforce their respect for humans.
- If you are concerned about personal protection you can carry an audible alarm, a flashlight, or an umbrella you can open and close.



Cities provide ideal habitat for coyotes and in turn they provide effective rodent control. Through education and a few simple precautions we can protect ourselves and our pets and possibly gain some respect and appreciation for our wild neighbours. For more information about coyotes, foxes and wildlife visit our web site at www.mississauga.ca