



President's Report – July 2016

In the last few weeks there have been two reported sightings of coyotes in Martin's Point. The following information shows how we must all do our part to reduce the possibility coyotes make Martin's Point their home or favorite visiting place. It is taken from an article based on an interview by Coastal Review Online with District 1 Coastal Regional Biologist James "Chris" Turner, and an article reprinted in the Outer Banks Voice.

Coyotes can live anywhere and have lived on the Outer Banks since 2009 in both Dare and Currituck counties. In spite of their carnivore reputation, they are actually omnivores and will eat berries, fruits, even insects. However, social media is buzzing with coyote sightings, and people posting on Facebook are blaming them for the loss of neighborhood cats and a decline in sightings of wild fox, possums, rabbits and even deer.

A few weeks ago a Jack Russell terrier was taken by a coyote from a porch at a Kitty Hawk residence. In late May, a pack of coyotes attacked and killed a miniature horse in Currituck County, and in 2015, a family reported wolves, coyotes or a combined pack killed a 500-pound horse and seriously injured another in Creswell. Dog and cat owners will need to make some hard decisions. Even unattended dogs left in fenced yards makes them potential targets.

Most clashes of wildlife and people are due to food, and there are steps you can take to minimize damage or visits to your property. The food issue arises in one of two ways: intentional and unintentional feeding of wild animals. Many people feed raccoons and possums, for example, and doing so attracts them into neighborhoods where they take up residence. Feeding these animals can attract coyotes, which are only too happy to make a meal out of the raccoon and the food you are feeding them.

Once coyotes become habituated to neighborhoods and humans, they lose their fear of us and become comfortable roaming our neighborhoods. Unintentional feeding such as leaving dog and cat food outside, especially food for outdoor cats, or throwing away table scraps in unsecured garbage cans has the same effect. A coyote will eat dog or cat food or dig into a trash can, and that can also encourage them to stay close by and become a common visitor.

Once coyotes find food sources in urban environments it's only a matter of time before they come across a pet dog or cat. If you're intentionally or unintentionally feeding wild animals or pets outdoors coyotes are now in the mix and you're feeding them also. We can take steps in our own yards, but if everyone is not cooperating, then the impact will be minimal. All of us must take steps to eliminate intentional feeding and greatly reduce unintentional feeding of wild animals.

Hunting or shooting coyotes with or without permits is not an option in a densely populated area such as Martin's Point. (In fact, our covenants prohibit the discharge of any firearm within our borders.) Besides, data shows that if the coyote population is significantly reduced they go into reproductive overdrive to replace their reduced numbers.

Soft traps that do not hurt the animals are available but pets can also be snared and even if they are not injured neighbors will likely protest. Property damage — which includes having your pet killed or injured by a wild animal — can result in wildlife officials issuing depredation permits to owners. Hunting and trapping work better on a large scale in rural areas. Depredation permits are site-specific and can include trapping, but given the small size of a typical yard, the odds of trapping a nuisance coyote are slim. And even if local animal control officers had the staff and time to tranquilize coyotes, it's unlawful to relocate them. Plus, given their presence throughout the state, there really is nowhere to take them.

So the good news is while we can take steps to discourage coyotes from hanging around, it is us humans who likely need to make changes and, in some cases, tough decisions. Intentional and unintentional feeding of wild animals needs to be eliminated as much as possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name "Aug", is located at the bottom center of the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.