



Branching Out

Autumn 2016

Branching Out is a production of Habitat Stewardship Group of Huron Woods, Sharon Callan, editor

COYOTE

LIFE AT THE TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN

Huron Woods is home to a wide variety of native species of birds, reptiles and amphibians, fish and mammals, each playing a part in a complex food web. Coyotes are apex predators living at the top of the food chain. Their presence in Huron Woods is proof that our Oak Savanna forest supports a healthy diverse ecosystem. Maintaining our native biodiverse woodlands is critical to the survival of these and all native species.



Pinery is home to two packs of coyotes, their howls often heard by Huron Woods residents. Individuals may be seen at dusk and dawn as they follow deer trails and patrol the Pinery fence. Howls allow individuals to track other members of the pack.

What Do Coyotes Eat?

Coyotes are opportunistic feeders, often surviving on creatures humans find annoying, including Canada Geese.

In winter, their diet consists mainly of rabbits, hares and deer, when the snow is so deep that the deer's mobility is restricted.

In spring, summer and fall, coyotes prey mainly on small mammals (fox, rodents, rabbits, mice and voles) and eat wild berries, birds, amphibians, grasshoppers and deer fawns. As a result, coyotes keep these populations under control, leaving the survivors healthier than they would otherwise be. They also eat fruits and vegetables.

RABIES is extremely rare in coyotes.

Foxes are frequent carriers of rabies. Coyotes hunt foxes but do not succumb themselves to rabies, thereby diminishing the incidence of this disease in the wild.



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Coyotes are intelligent adaptable creatures that live alongside humans very well, even in urban environments.

They are wary of humans and try to avoid them, making their dens in secluded areas, close to river banks and streams. They are active at night following deer trails, and seeking prey locations. Trapping coyotes is difficult because of their high intelligence and tendency to return to their established territories once released.

Pinery Park is home to two packs of coyotes. Sightings at dusk and dawn have been reported in Huron Woods. The fence adjoining Pinery is often patrolled by coyote adults.

PREVENTION IS KEY

Do not leave pet food outdoors.

Secure garbage.

Do not feed coyotes.

Repair holes under porches, and sheds, which are attractive den locations

Coyotes become aggressive when habituated to human contact so, no touching or feeding or enticement of any kind is key.

LIFE CYCLE

Coyotes breed in February and produce 5 to 6 pups on average in April or May. The pups are weaned by 6 weeks and taught to hunt at 10 weeks. Both parents participate in raising the pups.

The coyote family unit remains intact until autumn when the pups leave to find their own territories. When food is abundant, packs persist but when food is scarce, individuals forge on their own.

When hunted, the numbers do not diminish but rather the pack increases in size with more pups being born to each brood. Only when food becomes scarce do the numbers diminish. In lean times, an individual may have a territory of 100 square kilometers.

Individuals live for 8-12 years, the life span being shortened by hunting, trapping and vehicular deaths.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER A COYOTE

DO NOT

~ TURN AND RUN AWAY

~CORNER OR ENTRAP THE ANIMAL

~TRY TO TOUCH OR FEED THE ANIMAL

DO

~MAKE NOISE, BY YELLING, CLAPPING HANDS

~BACK AWAY SLOWLY STILL FACING THE ANIMAL

~GIVE THE ANIMAL SPACE TO ESCAPE (ENTRAPMENT WILL ONLY ENCOURAGE AN ATTACK)

~REMEMBER THAT THE ANIMAL WANTS TO AVOID HUMANS AS MUCH AS WE WISH TO AVOID IT



GOOD NEWS FROM THE WOODS

Recent Hognose Snake sightings on Pinetree Drive, The Trail and Riverview properties are hopeful signs of a resurgence of this beautiful, harmless and endangered species. Keeping our properties native and natural, driving slowly and watching for sunbathing snakes can increase survival rates.