



News from Colorado Parks and Wildlife

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COYOTE STUDY UNDERWAY IN DENVER METRO AREA

DENVER -- A research effort involving federal, state, and local partners is poised to discover new insights about the behavior of Colorado's urban coyotes and help wildlife managers improve strategies for dealing with these clever canids.

Stewart Breck, a researcher with USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services, will lead the effort to learn more about coyote behavior, including their use of settled landscapes, and to test community-based hazing techniques. Starting this month, researchers will begin work to radio-collar up to 60 coyotes in three study areas with the goal of tracking them for the next two years.

"As coyotes have adapted to living in urban environments, they've become highly tolerant of people," said Breck. "Because of this we have seen a serious increase in human-coyote encounters and conflicts. The general feeling of managers is we're seeing bolder, more aggressive coyotes."

Coyote-human conflicts have been on the rise in the Denver Metro area since 2008. Historically, about one person reported being bitten by a coyote each year. During the past four years, 16 people have reported being bitten. Most incidents involved suspected feeding of wildlife or the presence of a dog or dogs, which can make coyotes territorial.

The study, to be funded by the U. S. Department of Agriculture National Wildlife Research Center, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the City and County of Broomfield, Jefferson County, and the City of Lakewood, will focus on Adams, Broomfield, and Jefferson Counties. An additional rural area will be selected in the future to provide some comparison data.

Several communities participating in the research have already taken steps to address the issue.

Broomfield completed its Coexistence with Wildlife Policy in 2010," said Broomfield Open Space and Trails Director, Kristan Pritz. "We see this research project as a great way to build on the Policy as it will provide science-based research that focuses on our own community. We truly expect that this study will yield greater understanding of our local coyotes and give us new information to help us co-exist in a healthier and safe way."

The City of Lakewood created its own coyote video "Co-existing with Coyotes" in 2008, as they learned of increasing conflicts between pets and coyotes at local parks and even some animals denning on people's property.

"Our animal control officers worked closely with our local wildlife officer from the beginning, because they wanted to get a handle on the coyote issue in Jefferson County," said Carla Zinanti, Animal Control Manager for the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. "We've been able to put a Coyote Management Plan into place that represents our efforts to understand the coyote situation in the county and address the problem through education and awareness. The Coyote Study affords us the opportunity to understand the issue from a scientific perspective so that our efforts to mitigate coyote conflicts can be targeted to methods that really have an impact."

Trained volunteers will visit sites and record data on coyotes for the research, as well. This social science aspect is modeled after an Adams County Open Space funded citizen science Coyote Watch program in Aurora. The primary goal of this data collection will be to record behavior of coyotes and measure effectiveness of different stimuli and hazing techniques on an opportunistic basis.

"Citizens hold the key to dealing with many of the coyote problems in the Denver Metro Area," said Mary Ann Bonnell, Senior Natural Resources Specialist for Aurora Parks, Recreation and Open Space. "Coyote issues can arise unpredictably, where people have to respond themselves. Using citizen volunteers to help us record this behavioral information will help us understand how different members of the public respond to coyotes, as well as how the coyotes respond to people and various hazing techniques."

Coyotes live statewide in Colorado and in many areas, like the Denver Metro Area, are quite common. They thrive despite historic, widespread attempts to control or eradicate them. Coyotes are designated small game mammals in Colorado and are an important part of the ecosystem. They can be hunted year-round with a small game license, but in many areas, hunting is limited by city or municipal ordinances that prohibit the discharge of firearms.

"We're really encouraged that so many communities recognize the problem and have agreed to work together to find solutions," said Liza Hunholz, Denver-area wildlife manager for Colorado Parks and Wildlife. "We need to have a clear line between ourselves and wildlife in order to co-exist. Do coyotes a favor--don't feed them (or any wildlife), protect your pets, and haze coyotes when you see them."

If you are interested in becoming a trained volunteer for the research project through the citizen science Coyote Watch program, please contact Mary Ann Bonnell at 303-859-8911 or mbonnell@auroragov.org.

To learn more about how to avoid conflicts with coyotes, go to:

<http://wildlife.state.co.us/WildlifeSpecies/LivingWithWildlife/Mammals/Coyotes>

For more news about Division of Wildlife go to:
<http://wildlife.state.co.us/NewsMedia/PressReleases>

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