

Neighborhood Wildlife Stewards

Teaching our Highlands neighbors how to live safely with wildlife and keep the wildlife wild.

Coyote behavior in suburban areas is changing, and we in the Issaquah Highlands need to watch our habits to prevent conflict with these wild neighbors.

In the past, the only way you would likely notice a coyote was through their night-time howling, or possibly through a quick trailside glimpse at dawn or dusk. Five years ago, before any homes were built in the woods, resident Bill Potter experienced them in the woods, at night. On the dark side of dusk, near the stone bridge, he heard a yipping howl and then answering calls from a different direction. It was “echoing through the woods” and “really eerie.”

Last year, an IH homeowner saw a coyote in two areas of the neighborhood, and one of her sightings was quite different than Bill’s. One sighting was at the beginning or end of the day, when you might expect to catch a glimpse of a coyote. But the other, at the bottom of the hill, was at midday. “So skinny” and “greyish,” with long legs, it was “walking, looking around” and “didn’t care about the traffic or cars” on Highlands Drive.

Truly wild coyotes are nocturnal and afraid of humans. But the behavior of coyotes in suburban areas has changed in the last decade or so. There had never been a coyote attack on a human in Washington State until 2006, when two young children in Bellevue were bitten by a coyote in separate incidents on the same day. The coyote was later shot. Coyote attacks in California have also increased, with 21 injuries reported in the last decade.

Feeding coyotes, according to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Department, can cause them to lose their fear of people and become aggressive. Like bears, coyotes will use plant and animal food sources around our homes if we let them. In the woods, they take small mammals and birds, fawn and adult deer, and plant foods like berries and vegetables. In our yards, they’ll take spilled birdseed and trash. Even worse, they don’t distinguish between wild and domestic prey and will take outdoor cats.

Due to both bears and coyotes, this is not a good neighborhood for bird feeders or compost piles. Food waste can go in your yard waste container.

It’s important that we control food sources to keep our coyotes from becoming even more used to humans and attracted to our yards. Help us keep the wildlife wild, and let the coyote be an animal you might catch a glimpse of, running away, on a dawn or dusk hike through our woods, not an animal boldly confronting traffic at midday or foraging in a neighborhood yard.

*Please join Neighborhood Wildlife Stewards for our November meeting. Topic: Coyotes
Time and place: 7:00 p.m. on November 10th at Blakely Hall*