

## Coyotes – Dangerous to Pets

Up to now, it hasn't felt much like spring with what seems like an endless chill in the air, but it is indeed spring and with it comes the annual abundance of new life.

Coyotes, having bred from January to March, may have as many as 5 to 15 little mouths to feed in their dens. Although I advocate for wildlife, I love my pets too. Unfortunately, our cats and small dogs are easy prey for these stealthy, almost invisible hunters that can run up to 65 kms/hr.

I have witnessed a neighbor's cat swiped in the blink of an eye, in broad daylight from atop a stack of firewood. I'll never forget the horrible shrieks that woke us at 3:am last spring when one of our cats had become a coyote family's meal. It was a crushing blow to lose a beloved pet this way.

A few evenings ago we watched three deer browsing on our lawn in the twilight. Suddenly they raised their heads, ears pricked forward, alerted to something on the other side of our hedge. Just then we saw our neighbor's orange tabby sprint by and a moment later, barely visible in the diminishing light, we saw the coyote in full pursuit. Fortunately the cat made it to a tree and was able to escape but it took a lot of patient coaxing to get the terrified cat down from the safety of his high perch.

Coyotes are part of our wild natural landscape and it would be a poorer place without them. Who hasn't been thrilled by the sound of their wild yips and howls on a moonlit night? But as pet guardians, it is our responsibility to protect our pets from harm. Every spring I see notices for missing cats posted on bulletin boards and telephone poles, obviously put there by people who love their pets. I encourage everyone to keep their kitties indoors, even if it does mean having to clean a litter box. The same warning extends to small dogs. Never leave a little dog outside by him/herself as small dogs are also at risk of being taken even from a closed yard. Instead, walking them on a leash is good exercise for them and for us. By protecting our pets, we also help to protect wildlife by preventing these tragic encounters. After all, the wildlife is one of the reasons I enjoy living here.