10 WAYS TO HELP YOUR NEIGHBORS BE COYOTE AWARE
Is there conflict over coyotes in your neighborhood? To really get a handle on coyote problems, the most straightforward and least expensive route is to be proactive. That starts with educating the entire neighborhood about coyote ecology and coexistence.

Large quantities of concrete make up our suburbs and cities, yet these places are still part of nature and many wild animals try to eek out a living among the manicured lawns and lush city parks. That means we humans need to understand how to live alongside our wild neighbors. Typically, problems with urban coyotes begin with humans who are not quite sure how to coexist.

With coyotes, a little bit of seemingly innocent behavior such as letting one’s dog interact with a coyote or leaving scraps out to feed them are the start of much more serious problems. Even something as simple as a lack of awareness about attractants in one’s own yard, like bird feeders and compost piles, can be at the root of coyote problems.

Whether drawn closer to people by accident or on purpose, once a coyote is habituated to human presence to the point of becoming a problem animal, this individual and nearby coyotes may very well be doomed. The suggestion most people put forward to handle coyotes is to either kill them or relocate them. Neither of these strategies are long-term solutions, especially on a large scale. First, relocation is illegal in most states for wildlife disease control reasons, so if a coyote is trapped it is euthanized. Second, coyotes are territorial and when a territory opens up because the resident coyotes were removed, more coyotes quickly move in. Unless targeting a specific and known problem coyote, removal is generally expensive, ineffective and sometimes even dangerous for pets which can often accidentally be caught in traps.
A neighborhood worried about coyotes can’t necessarily eliminate the issue by attempting to eliminate coyotes.

To really get a handle on coyote problems, the most straightforward and least expensive route is to be proactive. Educating the entire neighborhood about how coyotes work and how to avoid problems with them is the quickest solution to coexistence. And this education should begin the moment a neighborhood spots its first coyote.

To this end, we have 10 suggestions on how to help your neighbors become more coyote aware, reduce the amount of fear and misunderstanding about coyotes, and reduce the potential for negative interactions.
01.

HANG COYOTE AWARENESS FLYERS

Let's start with the most obvious way to help get information out to neighbors: hanging up some one-sheets.

There are many sources for PDFs that can be downloaded and printed out – we have several listed below – or you can design your own based on the science offered by urban coyote researchers and the specific circumstances of your area.

For instance, your coyote-awareness one-sheet can address both how to handle coyote encounters and also list areas in your city with known coyote activity, or places where dog owners need to be particularly vigilant when walking. Or perhaps your one-sheet will list both facts and information as well as a website for a neighborhood alert so people can post their coyote sightings and provide a heads up for others, or dates for upcoming coyote awareness and coexistence events.

One neighborhood took this action to the next level by distributing lawn signs that include a QR code that smart phone users can use to link to online information about the area's coyotes.

Distributing one-sheets is a quick way to get a little extra information out to all your neighbors.
Key to reducing conflicts is educating people about how to be alert, proactive and keep coyotes away when they encounter one. A coyote hazing workshop allows neighbors to see a demonstration of techniques that work to scare off coyotes, and gives them a chance to practice the techniques before actually encountering a coyote.

Footage from a coyote hazing workshop for dog owners, held by Project Coyote in San Francisco at a park where dogs and coyotes have had conflicts, is available for viewing at urbancoyoteinitiative.com/neighbors. The videos can be embedded in websites and can be shared with neighborhood message boards, and of course they are also helpful for gathering ideas and material for hosting your own coyote hazing workshop to promote coexistence and safety in your neighborhood.

You can even arrange a coyote hazing workshop through the Humane Society.

Also available at urbancoyoteinitiative.com/neighbors. is a downloadable coyote hazing brochure from Project Coyote that can be handed out to attendees and distributed around the neighborhood to folks who couldn't attend.
03.

HOLD A MOVIE NIGHT

Make it extra fun to learn about coyotes by hosting a moving night. It can be held at someone’s home (maybe even a backyard outdoor movie night to be closer to your wild neighbors!) or at a local community center, theater or library. Make some popcorn, set out some snacks, and sit back to enjoy interesting and educational films about coyotes. There can be a Q&A or discussion afterward, or perhaps invite a local coyote expert to answer questions.

Two films that we recommend for a movie night include:

Still Wild at Heart
A one-hour documentary about the urban coyotes of San Francisco. Coyotes arrived in the city around 2001, and are now found in every neighborhood from Ocean Beach to Telegraph Hill. Viewers are sure to see their city mirrored in the experience of San Francisco, and find a new appreciation of the adaptable canids. There is a shortened 30-minute version called American Coyote that focuses on the expansion of coyotes into urban areas and how we can coexist with the species.

Meet The Coywolf
A popular episode of PBS Nature that explores how western coyotes spread out to the east, how they picked up wolf and domestic dog DNA along the way, and how they are adapting to living in and around the cities of the east coast. Anyone living east of the Mississippi will be interested in learning about the specifics of what is now a hybrid but might just end up being considered a new species of canid by scientists in the near future.
HOLD A WORKSHOP FOR DOG OWNERS

A coyote hazing workshop is great for all community members, but there is enough specific information that dog owners should know about coyotes that it is worth holding a special workshop.

Many myths that worry dog owners can be dispelled in a workshop, such as the notion that coyotes lure dogs into traps so the pack can attack (they don’t – this is typically the result of a dog chasing a single coyote and the family coming to that coyote’s rescue) and that a coyote following a dog and owner is stalking them (they’re often just ensuring the unwelcome visitors leave their territory). A workshop is also a great place for dog owners to have their questions answered and to share ideas and strategies for safety while walking.

Things to cover include why coyotes tend to show more interest in walkers when they have a dog with them, when dogs and coyotes are more likely to have conflicts (such as during pupping season, or if you have a small dog), what to do with your dog if a coyote is spotted, why it is a bad idea to let your dog “play” or chase coyotes, and more.

You can also find a good deal of information in our article, “What to do if you encounter a coyote while walking your dog” at urbancoyoteinitiative.com/dogwalking
HOST A NOISE-MAKER CRAFT PARTY FOR NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS

Teaching kids about their wild neighbors, from the backyard birds and squirrels to raccoons and coyotes, is a wonderful way to both connect them to nature as well as prepare them for how to behave around these critters.

A craft party is a perfect opportunity to teach children in a light-hearted setting how to scare off a coyote if they see one. The event instills confidence, not fear, about these canid neighbors.

The easiest noisemaker craft is an aluminum can filled about a third of the way with pennies and duct tape over the opening. You can come up with fun ways to decorate the outside of the cans, such as painting them, covering them with animal stickers, or drawing coyotes on paper to wrap around the outside of the can.

If you’re looking for extra inspiration, check out craft articles on how to make noise makers as a great start. Plastic water bottles filled with bells, or a paddle with buttons on strings that bang like a drum when you twirl it, are engaging crafts for kids. You can figure out ways to make this even louder by using an old pie tin or cake pan and pennies, and the tin can be decorated just like the aluminum cans.
06.

**TAKE PART IN NEIGHBORHOOD MESSAGE BOARDS**

Online neighborhood message boards, such as those on nextdoor.com or Facebook groups for neighborhood associations, are used to report the latest happenings including the latest coyote sightings. This often sparks debate and opinion about how to respond to the presence of coyotes.

Be the voice of reason in what can easily become a screaming match. Make suggestions about coexistence and proactive steps to prevent problem coyotes, and back them up with solid scientific data and researched facts while linking to reliable sources for more information.

Some of the sources you can use include:

- projectcoyote.org
- urbancoyoteresearch.com
- easterncoyoteresearch.com
- uwurbancanidproject.weebly.com
- Urban Carnivores
- Coyotes: Biology, Behavior and Management
- Our articles discussing coyote ecology and coexistence

When you respond, remember that honey works better than vinegar. Calm, rational, well-written responses will always do more for urban coyotes, even if it seems like no one is listening. You might change minds without knowing it by reaching individuals who are keeping up with the message boards but perhaps are not taking part. And who knows, through your level-headed and well-researched responses, you might just change the minds of even the most vocal anti-coyote neighbors.
07.

WRITE AN OP-ED FOR THE LOCAL PAPER

If coyotes are a source of concern for your town or city, consider taking your neighborhood message board comments to the next level by writing an op-ed about coexistence for your local paper.

List the science-based information that demonstrates how and why coyotes are here to stay, and outline strategies neighbors can use to minimize any possibility of conflict, from removing attractants from their yards to being vigilant while walking their pets to hazing coyotes if they see any. Just like with message board comments, a well-researched article with a calm and welcoming tone works best to reach the highest number of people.

Some well-written op-eds about urban coyotes that can be used as inspiration include:

- Carnivores in Our Midst: Should We Fear Them?
- Save the rats, mice and other vermin: Kill a coyote
- Guest editorial: For managing coyotes, follow the lead of Huntington Beach
- Community Editorial: Don’t Kill Garden Grove Coyotes
- Editorial: Coyote-not-so-ugly
08. HOLD A COYOTE-SMART BACKYARD PLANNING PARTY

When it comes to backyard planning, you can go beyond the perfect deck and herb garden. Get the neighborhood together to talk about how to make their yards as unattractive to coyotes as possible. This keeps everyone’s pets a bit more safe, and reduces the possibility of conflicts since coyotes will have little reason to hang around.

Topics to cover include cleaning up attractants, how to close off compost to coyotes (which can actually be harmful to coyotes and other wildlife), how to close off openings under decks, sheds and foundations that might look like warm places to den, and even how to install motion-activated sprinkler systems to frighten off curious coyotes.

Coyotes are omnivorous and opportunistic eaters, so attractants include ripe or fallen fruit, ripe garden vegetables, spilled bird seed, dirty barbecue grills, bird baths and ponds, pet food dishes left on patios, and anything that might attract rodents since coyotes love to feast on mice, rats and other small animals.

A backyard planning party will not only help people learn ways to keep coyotes out, but it will also likely provide neighbors with a ton of coyote information they didn’t yet know. After all, not everyone realizes that coyotes enjoy fruit or that trimming the shrubs to reduce hiding places can be a helpful deterrent.

The Humane Society's Coyote Management and Coexistence Plan template offers not only a checklist for a backyard audit but also several other documents your neighborhood or city may find useful for smart management.
09.

ORGANIZE A LECTURE ABOUT URBAN WILDLIFE

It is always helpful to bring in an expert, and sometimes a known expert is the only person a perturbed neighbor is willing to listen to. If your neighborhood has coyote activity, organize a lecture that discusses coyote ecology, myths and facts, and how to be coyote aware.

Seek out an expert from a local college, nature organization or wildlife rescue center who is knowledgeable about coyote behavior, especially urban coyote behavior. It may be worth coming up with a list of questions and interviewing the expert beforehand to ensure they really know their stuff before bringing them on as the speaker.

Set up a side-table near the door to provide take-home materials for attendees, which they can hand out to neighbors who couldn’t make it to the event. This will help spread the word even more as well as give neighbors something to reference if they have questions after the event.
10. PRINT AND DISTRIBUTE COPIES OF A HELPFUL BOOKLET

The booklet “Coyotes in Our Midst: Coexisting with an Adaptable and Resilient Carnivore” by Project Coyote is filled with information about coyotes, dispels myths through science, and provides a great deal of advice. It is a thorough review of everything the average person needs to know about coyotes and can be extremely helpful for educating your community about these wild canid neighbors.

This is a more expensive option, since printing a booklet can get pricy. But if the neighborhood comes together to cover printing costs, or prints a few copies to put out in local cafes, libraries, office waiting rooms and other central locations, it could end up being very helpful.

You can also simply provide a link to the downloadable PDF on one-sheet flyers handed out at gatherings, or in any neighborhood message boards you might frequent.

Find the booklet at: projectcoyote.com/Coyotes_In_Our_Midst.pdf

Images by Jaymi Heimbuch, Urban Coyote Initiative