

COYOTE AND DEER SIGHTINGS IN MOLINE

February 2006

Recently, the presence of coyotes and deer in the City of Moline has created some concern for many Moline residents. Numerous sightings of coyote and deer have been reported to the police department, city and state officials, and licensed wildlife control services. Following is information regarding wild animals and recommended precautions.

COYOTES

Coyotes are common throughout Illinois, and are abundant in west central Illinois. Until recently, they have not been observed frequently within inner city areas. Contrary to popular belief coyotes do not require open space or wild areas to survive. They occur in all types of habitat including urban and suburban areas. They are most abundant in areas with a mixture of farmland, woodland and grassland. They tend to live around brush or lightly wooded areas, traveling waterways such as creeks, as well as trails and paths. Though they are not considered to be domesticated animals, coyotes can live comfortably near humans and are frequently seen in close proximity to joggers and bikers and in residential areas. Wooded areas and creeks in the urban environments have become a new haven for coyotes. Coyotes live in a pack that maintains a strict territory.

Coyotes are most active a night, though they can be seen during daylight hours, especially during their mating season, February and March. Their young are born in April and May and the young may be on their own in June and July.

Coyotes generally eat small animals such as frogs, mice, rats, squirrels and rabbits, and some birds. They will also eat birdseed, pet food, fruits and vegetables and human garbage. They rarely prey on animals larger than them, but are capable of taking small dogs and cats that are unsupervised.

The coyote resembles a small German Shepard dog, but carries its bushy tail below the level of the back. Its upper body is typically light gray to dull yellow, but can vary from mostly black to nearly all gray or white. Course outer hairs are usually tipped with black while throat and under parts are usually whitish, cream colored or pinkish yellow. Its muzzle is long and narrow and its ears are erect and pointed. Coyotes vary in length from 44 to 54 inches, with a 15-17 inch tails, and their weight may vary from 20 to 45 pounds.

Attacks on humans are extremely rare, with less than 20 attacks being reported in North America over the past 30 years. None are known to be fatal, and most occurred in western states. While coyotes are not normally a danger to humans, they will display defensive behaviors if threatened or cornered. Coyotes may behave aggressively towards humans that have gotten too close to their prey or family. Therefore it is important to maintain a safe distance between humans and coyotes. It is also important that coyotes retain their natural wariness of humans.

DEER

Deer are also native to Illinois and are a natural part of our environment. While deer sightings within the city have increased, deer are considered to be harmless to humans and pets, and tend to shy away from the approach of humans. Deer may be a problem for motorists as they cross roadways. Residents can help lessen the attraction of deer, coyotes and other wild animals to their neighborhoods by refraining from leaving food sources for them.

PRECAUTIONS RESIDENTS SHOULD TAKE

- ✓ NEVER attempt to feed coyotes, deer, or any other wild animal.
- ✓ Do not leave food out for wild animals.
- ✓ Do not allow spillage to accumulate around bird or squirrel feeders.
- ✓ Eliminate potential food and water sources outside, including standing water.
- ✓ Feed pets indoors, or keep food and watering dishes inside at night.
- ✓ Store garbage inside, or in heavy-duty containers that cannot be opened by animals.
- ✓ Keep outside grills and barbeques clean and covered.
- ✓ Erect fully enclosed animal enclosures or fence off yards where pets reside.
- ✓ Do not leave small pets outside unattended, even in fenced areas.
- ✓ Keep cats and dogs inside, or leashed in close proximity to adults.
- ✓ Keep yards free from potential shelter such as brush or weeds.
- ✓ Enclose areas underneath porches and decks.
- ✓ NEVER leave small children unattended outside without adults in close proximity.

Coyotes and deer are native to Illinois and are a natural part of our environment. Residents should take the steps listed above so that these wild animals are not unduly encouraged to frequent their property.

LAWS GOVERNING CONTROL OF WILD ANIMALS

It is unlawful to trap, shoot, or relocate wild animals in Illinois without a license or permit issued by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

The Moline Code of Ordinances prohibits keeping, harboring, possessing or acting as custodian of any wild animal within the city. [Sec. 7-1109] The Code also prohibits the discharge of any firearm, bow and arrow, spring-loaded gun, sling, slingshot, air gun or any other weapons within the city. [Sec. 22-4103]

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO RESIDENTS

City of Moline animal control officers are not authorized to trap, shoot or relocate wild animals. However there are wildlife services located in Moline that are licensed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

For information and removal services regarding wild animals, residents may contact:
Christman's Wildlife Services, Moline, 762-5287
Web site: www.christmanswildlife.com

For more information regarding coyotes, deer and other wildlife contact:
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Northwest Region I Office, Sterling, 815-625-2968
Region I Wildlife Biologist, 815-625-0086
DNR Web Site <http://dnr.state.il.us/>

For information regarding animal control within the City of Moline:
Moline Police Department – Animal Control 797-0741

To report an in-progress animal control problem or animal bite
Moline Police Department – 797-0401