

## COYOTES ON THE PROWL

Did you know that we share our community with an amazing assortment of “wild” animals? These are the creatures of the wild which have inhabited our area for far longer than humans have been here. Except for the occasional encounter with a skunk or perhaps a snake or turtle, most of us never notice these neighbors. Ever notice vultures soaring in circles signaling that some creature has departed this life and needs to be removed? Or how about some of the hawks that will circle rising and diving on currents of air. The birds indeed are a bit more visible.

I bring this up because a neighbor just dropped by to ask if I could help get a fence repaired on a vacant house next door to her home. There are very few things that I can do to assist with anything taking place on private property, but that is not my point anyway. The reason for her concern is that a neighbor's dog had been mauled by a coyote that evidently came through the falling fence. Actually, I assured her, the fence is not much of a deterrent to a coyote, which can easily clear a 6 ft. obstacle. They are amazingly athletic. The house in question backs up on a bayou which is patrolled regularly by coyotes.

In fact there have been a number of small dogs and cats in the area that have been attacked and killed by coyotes in the past year. I share this information because I suspect that most of our neighbors have no idea that this has become a problem in our community. I was startled several years ago to take my small dog outside in the front yard around 2 AM and to watch a coyote walking down the middle of the street as though he owned the place. My presence caused him absolutely no concern, which concerned me greatly!

According to fish and game experts, coyotes do not generally pose a problem for adults. They are, however, a serious threat to small pets. We all know how elusive and fast a cat can be, but trust me, cats are not a match for coyotes. Several cats have been found dismembered in our neighborhood. That should give you pause to think. Even medium sized dogs can be at risk.

Here's the really scary part. Coyotes are generally not a threat to adults. They go after the “low hanging fruit”, the easy prey. But coyotes have been known to attack small children which have been left unattended in their yard. A couple of years ago I remember a TV news feature about a neighbor chasing a coyote away from a child playing in a neighbor's front yard. In broad daylight! So while they are nocturnal, you may occasionally see one in the day time. Experts warn that any coyote you see in the daytime may be ill or injured and may even be rabid, so stay very clear of it and call animal control.

Should you see a coyote at night you are likely to have a problem getting authorities to respond to the call unless there is some clear and present danger. The attitude of most authorities towards coyotes is about the same as for alligators. We are actually in their habitat, so just leave them alone. Wish I had better news, but you've been warned.