

Outdoor Rec / Local

Coyotes: too friendly lately



THE OUTDOOR COLUMN
By Todd Arriola

Shortly before this article was written, I noticed how drastic a change can occur in the behavioral patterns of animals with the devastation of wild-fires. Specifically, coyotes are becoming much too friendly.

It seems that, before this period, I would see a coyote that was either too far away, or too close (yes, that's an issue sometimes), taking into consideration a rifle's expected effective range. The issue of a coyote at too great a distance would be obvious: ethically, at what point

do you lose confidence it will be a successful, clean shot? As far as too close? Well, the fact that they can be spooked easily, and they can run faster than a turtle doesn't help any.

Now, it appears, coyotes are licking their chops and

displaying a bold tendency to relocate even closer to humans and livestock, without realizing that not all humans appreciate the coziness. Our dog-like neighbors are well-camouflaged among the sagebrush in the hills, but, once they make their way down to the fields, not so much. They stand out like a sore thumb (preferably on the non-hammer or non-trigger hand).

A prime example of my personal observation of this population explosion occurred the other day,

while I was, not surprisingly, looking for coyotes. I had other non-hunting tasks, but before and after those were completed, I used the time to search. At the time, I didn't know that a neighbor had shot seven coyotes within the last couple of weeks, so I wasn't expecting to see many. To say that I was surprised and pleased about how the day went is an understatement.

I had with me a bolt-action Winchester .30-06, which is my usual, cover-the-bases rifle, and a leather belt that held 20 extra cartridges. (I'd received, as an early birthday gift from my father, a bolt-action Savage Model 11, in .223, but it hadn't been sighted in yet by this time). I saw two coyotes in the same field that morning, but, unsure about having permission to hunt there—always ask if you don't know—I moved on around to the other side of the valley.

As I was about to give up looking on my way back to the other side, I noticed one not far from the live-

stock corrals of the aforementioned neighbor, and I shot him—the coyote, not the neighbor.

I left to complete some work, since it was time to get to it, but at the end of the day, I decided to look again for more coyotes.

The first two I saw earlier were still amazingly in the same field, but I hadn't asked about permission to hunt there yet. Once I did that, I returned to find both of them in almost the same place, and I shot successfully at the duo.

After that, as I was basically calling it a day, and I saw yet another one farther down the road, in another field. This one wasn't as close as the other ones had been (the ranges weren't great), but the shot seemed doable. Until he ran, and I missed. It happens, and three out of four isn't bad.

Keep in mind, this was all from only a partial day of searching for coyotes, and I had no binoculars, so, there are certainly many more out there to be harvested by anyone with the proper equipment, time and permission ...

NRAC Plan

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Gary Dielman spoke up saying that he had heard the comment the Commissioners were dysfunctional if they did not act as one unit, and stated, "That's not what you're elected to do."

Harvey replied, "Those were not her words. You said she said one unit that is not what she said. She said work together—"

Dielman interjected before Harvey had finished speaking. "Will you just let me talk? Then you can comment on what I am saying. Please do not interrupt me or any other speaker until they've said their piece. You're always doing that and I don't appreciate it."

Harvey replied, "Thank you, please continue."

Thus set the tone for the remainder of the meeting.

After all public comment was heard, the commissioners moved to vote unanimously to accept the Natural Resources Plan with the understanding that after the first of the year a couple of hearings would be scheduled to listen to proposed changes.

Commission Chair Harvey then advised that an alteration to the agenda had been requested and was necessary to accommodate Dielman's desire to address an item on the agenda regarding prayer discussion.

Dielman, who said he was suffering from a broken wrist, had a doctor's appointment he said he needed to get to.

"I'll let you discuss this in your own words," Harvey said to Dielman.

Dielman said, "I have presented you with a question, 'Is this a Christian County Commission?' The answer I got from commissioner Bennett was 'No' and I said 'Well, all of the invocations and prayers at the beginning of your meetings are Christian.' I disagree with him that this is not a Christian (Commission). Because if the other two commissioners always go along with Christian prayer then that is the de facto prayer policy for the County Commissioners. I have not heard back as to whether or not there is a written policy or not but I suggested that you have one and that you research what the Supreme Court has said about promoting a certain religion without representation from anyone else, never asking anybody of a different religion to give an invocation."

Dielman said he had provided a carbon copy of this to all three commissioners as well as District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff. He also indicated Shirtcliff could enlighten them of a Supreme Court case, the name he was unable to recall, that was really "en pointe to what I'm talking about."

With that he excused himself to attend his appointment, saying he hoped someone would fill him in on the discussion that was had after he left.

"You don't want to listen, huh?" was heard from the audience.

He held up his wrist as he walked out, saying, "I have a broken wrist I have a doctor's appointment for."

As he continued to walk toward the door, witness accounts tell of Dielman approaching John Creighton and shoving his wrist into Creighton's face. Creighton, who is handicapped in the legal sense of the word with only one hand, pushed Dielman away. Conflicting statements ensued as to whether Dielman had grabbed or hit Creighton's shoulder.

Commission Chair Harvey got up to intervene in the scuffle and calm the situation.

Creighton said to Dielman, "Keep your hands off of me."

Dielman yelled in response, "He assaulted me!" and pointed to Creighton.

Creighton said, "No, you hit me first."

Deilman said, "I didn't touch you."

Creighton stated, "Yes, you did."

Harvey was able to usher Dielman from the County Courtroom after Dielman assured Harvey, "I'm fine. He didn't hurt me."

Dielman stated over his shoulder as he left, "I don't appreciate my motives for leaving being questioned."

After the crowd settled down some, Harvey was able to continue on with the meeting. He said, "Everything is emotional lately. Let's just try and keep it under control."

There was a discussion on the matter with some of the witnesses referring to the same prayer issue being ignited by Dielman within the City Council and tying them up from addressing other City business for nearly six months. The issue culminated in Dielman's recall as a City Councillor.

Harvey then turned his attention to Resolution 2015-1005, supporting Malheur County's Opposition to the Owyhee Canyonlands. After discussion, the resolution was agreed upon by the commissioners and passed.

A few other housekeeping items were addressed before adjourning the meeting.

Sheriff Ash, who had been present at the beginning of the meeting but left to attend another meeting before the scuffle between Dielman and Creighton, returned and spoke with Creighton about the incident.

According to Ash, Creighton did not wish to pursue the matter. Ash did indicate that should Dielman wish to move forward an outside agency, most likely the Oregon State Police would be called in to handle any investigation into the matter.

Editor's Note:

Since the meeting, Dielman has issued a series of several emails cc'ing both media and Commissioners asking for meetings over the issue of prayer, and writes, among other items, "Without a public apology from John Creighton, I will file charges against him for his criminal assault on me and for the whitewashing of the assault by the County Commission."

Dielman has requested a private meeting with Commissioners after next week's County Commission session to further discuss the issue of Christian prayer before meetings.

—ODFW RECREATION REPORT—

Rifle deer season opens Oct. 3

Oregon's most popular hunting season opens this Saturday Oct. 3. See the regional recreation reports or the Big Game Hunting Forecast to find out what wildlife biologists in the field are predicting. Conditions remain dry so don't forget to check for restrictions and closures before you head out.

Get your cougar and bear tag by Oct. 2

Most cougar and bear are taken when hunters are after deer and elk. Don't forget to pick up a tag by the Oct. 2 deadline.

NE OREGON HUNTING

BAKER COUNTY

The 39 road near Halfway is now open.

Hunters should find DEER around cool moist northern aspects with good forage nearby. The continuation of warm temperatures will limit animal activity to early morning and late evening. Remember to check the regulations for the area you will be hunting.

Cougars can be found throughout Baker County but hunters should target areas with high concentrations of deer and elk. Setting up on a fresh kill or using distress calls

can all be productive techniques. Hunters are required to check in the hide of any cougar taken, with skull and proof of sex attached. Remember to pick up a 2015 tag.

Bear season opened August 1. Successful hunters, remember check-in of bear skull is mandatory; see the regulations for details. Biologists recommend propping the bear's mouth open with a stick after harvest; it makes for easier tooth collection and measuring.

Coyote numbers are good throughout the district. Try calling in early morning and late afternoon. Remember to ask for permission before hunting on private properties.

Grouse season starts September 1. Blue grouse can be found in the higher elevations while ruffed grouse are more common in wetter areas. Hunters should expect an average year for grouse. Successful hunters are asked to place the tails and wings from harvested birds in the collection barrels.

GRANT COUNTY

The Canyon Creek Complex Fire: Conditions and closures are changing and hunters are encouraged to visit inciweb for updated fire information.

Controlled rifle deer opens

Oct. 3. Deer populations appear to be increasing slightly and a good number of mature bucks were observed in last fall surveys. Hunters should look for areas of early seral forage, like old burns or wet meadows, as deer will key in on those areas in late summer.

Grouse season starts September 1 and grouse populations appear to be similar to last year. Blue grouse can be found on ridge tops like Nipple Butte, Aldrich Mountain or Vinegar Hill. Ruffed grouse can be found along riparian area like Murderers Creek or Camp Creek.

Cougar hunting remains open. Successful hunters should remember that check-in of the hide with skull and proof of sex attached is mandatory; see the regulations for details. Remember to pick up a 2015 tag.

Coyote numbers are good in most of the district. Coyotes may respond to distress calls. Try calling in the early morning and late evening.

MALHEUR COUNTY

DEER controlled rifle hunting seasons open Oct. 3. As with most of Oregon mild winter conditions were favorable for deer and over winter survival was good. Summer fires

burned up portions of all the hunt units in Malheur District, hunters are encouraged to view fire maps or by contacting the Vale BLM office at 541-473-3144.

Cougar hunting is open. Populations are healthy and distributed throughout the district in any area with a big game prey base. Successful hunters must check-in cougars no more than 10 days after harvest; please bring cougar in thawed and with mouth propped open for easier tissue sampling, teeth collection and tagging.

Coyote hunting is available throughout the district. Reproduction this year appears to be good which should enhance calling opportunities. Areas with livestock feeding and calving operations are always strong attractors for coyotes.

A mild winter and below average precipitation helped with over-winter survival of adult birds but was unfavorable for chukar and quail in the rangelands. Fortunately, much of the county received above-average rain fall in May and early June which helped improve range conditions. While brood sizes are good, overall bird populations are still down. Hunters should expect hunting conditions similar to last year.

Chukar surveys on established routes yielded 45 chukar per 10 miles and good production with 10.3 chicks per brood. This is a 6% decrease from last year when 47 birds per 10 miles were measured and is 11% below the 10-year average of 50.5 birds per 10 miles.

The Succor Creek/Leslie Gulch area has only experienced limited recovery. The poor range conditions caused by an ongoing invasion of medusahead likely limits the ability of birds in this area to successfully raise broods. The most productive routes were South of Harper in the Cottonwood Canyon, Freezout/Dry Creek (west side of the Owyhee reservoir), Cottonwood Mountain and Brogan Canyon.

Pheasant The surveys along established routes yielded 10.8 birds per 10 miles which is a 45% increase in number of birds observed from last year's survey and 32% above the 10-year average. Chick production was above average at 4.3 chicks per brood. Hunting prospects will vary depending on the farming practices in the area where you have permission to hunt. The outlying areas around Willow Creek and Vale have higher bird numbers than areas closer to Ontario and Nyssa.

There is very little public land pheasant hunting opportunity in the area and the few parcels that are available tend to get hunted daily.

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