

Portland's urban coyotes become a university research project

Urban-rural divide plays out when coyotes come to town

By ERIC MORTENSON
EO Media Group

PORTLAND — Coyotes are a fairly common sight in rural areas of the Pacific Northwest and Northern California, and landowners might instinctively reach for the rifle if they see one in the pasture or sniffing around the barn.

Put a coyote in a city, however, and residents are more likely to react in a way that ranges from trying to feed them to panicking over their pets and children. Coyotes sometimes lose their heads as well, becoming so habituated to people and urban environments that they trot down streets in broad daylight and snack on garbage or the occasional cat.

Many cities, Portland among them, now are home to thriving coyote populations.

Researchers in Chicago a few years ago estimated Cook County had 1,500 to 2,000 coyotes.

Zuriel Rasmussen, a student at Portland State University, is trying to learn more about how coyotes and humans coexist in cities. Rasmussen is a researcher and director of the Portland Urban Coyote Project, which maps coyote sightings and provides information in collaboration with the Audubon Society of Portland.

Rasmussen is pursuing a Ph.D in Earth, Environment and Society, a program offered through Portland State's Geography Department. She's interested in science communication and public engagement, and the coyote project offers opportunities for both.

She comes at it from a rural perspective. She lived in Weston, near Pendleton in Eastern Oregon, until she was 12. Coyotes were part of the landscape there, and she was startled the first time she saw one in Portland.

"I was one of those East Oregonians surprised to see a coyote," she said. "I thought



Zuriel Rasmussen, a Ph.D student at Portland State University, studies urban coyotes.

it was pretty cool. I was fascinated with how they were living in the city and how that's even possible."

Commonplace

The possible now is commonplace. Residents of the Portland metro area have reported 1,916 coyote sightings to Rasmussen's project website just this year. Coyote calls keep The U.S. Department of Agriculture's APHIS Wildlife Services hopping

as well: From 2012 through 2015, officers responded to an average of 373 coyote "conflict" complaints in Clackamas County, which borders Portland, and killed an average of 30 a year, according to statistics provided by Kevin Christensen, of the Wildlife Services office in Portland.

Wildlife Services responded to an average of 222 coyote conflicts a year in Washington County, on Portland's west side, and killed an average of 15 a year during the same time frame. Wildlife Services does not have a cooperative service agreement with Multnomah County, which covers most of Portland, but killed three coyotes that were acting aggressively toward people and pets.

Of the Clackamas County coyote complaints, 56 percent involved damage or threat of damage to agriculture. In Washington County, 54 percent of the coyote conflicts involved agriculture, according to statistics provided by Christensen.

At Portland State, Rasmussen's studies over the past

couple years have shown the urban and rural divide plays out with coyotes as it does with many other issues. Some Eastern Oregon residents have posted graphic YouTube videos about hunting coyotes, complete with slow-motion replays of bullets hitting coyotes at long range.

Portlanders' reaction to the presence of coyotes appears to range from neutral to positive, Rasmussen said. Although concerned about coyotes attacking pets, they're generally supportive of coyotes and opposed to lethal control.

"One of the big things I've found is that the impact coyotes have on your life bears a lot on your attitude," she said. In rural areas, they've been vilified — along with wolves — as something that threatens people's livelihoods, particularly with livestock, she said.

'Glimpse of the wild'

In cities, they're not seen as a threat to the way people make a living. Instead, they are "a glimpse of the wild in an urban environment,

which is a different experience than seeing a coyote near your sheep pasture."

Analysis of urban coyote scat shows their diet is primarily rats, mice, squirrels and rabbits, "pretty similar to a rural coyote," Rasmussen said. They eat more garbage than their rural cousins, and about 1 to 2 percent of their diet is cats.

"They're super opportunistic," she said.

Part of her work involves advising city residents what to do when they see a coyote. She said urban coyotes can become habituated to humans, and people should "retrain" them to be wary. She recommends "hazing" them by yelling, using an air horn, shaking a coffee can full of rocks or other methods. People obviously shouldn't feed coyotes, either directly or by leaving pet food or garbage accessible, and should keep a close eye on pets, she said.

"When they get used to being around people, those are the coyotes that cause problems," she said.

Grant will finance wave energy project off Newport

Associated Press

Oregon State University has landed a federal grant for the design, permitting and construction of an advanced wave energy test facility off Newport.

The Corvallis Gazette-Times reported that the U.S. Department of Energy announced the decision Wednesday. Department officials

say the grant is for up to \$40 million but the final amount is subject to appropriation.

The Pacific Marine Energy Center South Energy Test Site will be an open-water, grid-connected facility for trying out devices being developed by private companies to capture the energy of ocean waves and turn it into electricity.

Judge stops logging on former portion of Elliott State Forest

Associated Press

EUGENE — A federal judge has banned logging on a former piece of Elliott State Forest near Coos Bay.

The Register-Guard reported that Judge Ann Aiken

in U.S. District Court in Eugene on Monday issued a preliminary injunction barring Scott Timber Co. and Roseburg Forest Products from logging the area while she considers a lawsuit by a Eugene-based conservation group.

Rare butterflies return to Saddle Mountain

The Daily Astorian

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to reintroduce a dwindling butterfly species at Saddle Mountain State Natural Area.

The Oregon Silverspot Butterfly, a threatened species with yellow-orange wings, was once widespread among 20 different locations, from Northern California to southern Washington. Now, only five populations remain: four in Oregon, one in California.

Silverspots gained Endangered Species Act protection status in 1980 but, in recent years, suffered dramatic population declines in Oregon. The Fish and Wildlife Service is working with the Oregon and Woodland Park Zoos, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and the U.S. Forest Service to reverse this trend.

The government also plans to re-establish the silverspots



Cathy Peterson/For The Daily Astorian

Youth from the Student Conservation Association and the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park Pathways program check out an Oregon silverspot butterfly on Mount Hebo in 2013.

at the Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge in southern Tillamook County.

Saddle Mountain State Natural Area, owned and managed by the state Parks and Recreation Department, has high numbers of nectar and violet plants, which the butterflies enjoy. Meanwhile, the Nestucca Bay refuge has been

actively restoring habitat for silverspots in preparation for their return.

The service is proposing to designate these populations as experimental to provide surrounding landowners with assurances the reintroductions will not impose economic or regulatory restrictions on their properties.



A MESSAGE FROM SPARKY AND YOUR FRIENDS AT THE ASTORIA FIRE DEPT.

- ▶ Please test your smoke alarms
- ▶ Practice cooking and kitchen safety
- ▶ Always sleep with your bedroom door closed
- ▶ Practice your home fire-escape plan
- ▶ Don't leave burning candles unattended

HAPPY HOLIDAYS
555 30th St. • Astoria
(503) 325-2345

Only \$65!
per night

Hometown Special includes free shuttle on New Year's Eve to and from all the downtown festivities!

RATE AVAILABLE FROM FRI DECEMBER 23 THROUGH MON JANUARY 2 TO RESERVE YOUR NIGHTS, GO TO ASTORIARIVERWALKINN.COM OR CALL 503.325.2013 AND USE PROMO CODE "ASTORIA"

Season's Greetings!
from

ASTORIA RIVERWALK INN

400 Industry Street Astoria, OR 97103 (503) 325-2013
www.astoriariverwalkinn.com

THANK YOU

CAA wants to thank all of our supporters and volunteers for helping to make this year's annual fundraiser the most successful ever. Because of you we can continue to cover medical care and adoption promotions for the shelter dogs and cats. Special thanks goes to all of you who donated the fabulous items for our raffles and silent auction, to Fort George for donating the space, and to Clatsop Regional Food Bank for allowing us to use freezer space. Linda Perkins spearheaded our bake sale and coordinated dozens of bakers. We are grateful for all of your support.

Marcy Dunning
for CAA

JENNY

OREO & COOKIE

2016

Animal Shelter CLATSOP ANIMAL ASSISTANCE
Helping the Shelter with volunteers and \$\$