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SANTA MONICA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Public Information Bulletin

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE IN SANTA MONICA

Part of Santa Monica's beauty comes from its proximity to the Santa Monica Mountains, an area that is abundant with wildlife. Many species of wild animals have managed to adapt and develop in our urban environment. The presence of squirrels, possums, and raccoons in many neighborhoods is not uncommon, and in some cases, these species are surprising plentiful.

Another animal which has been more frequently sighted in the last several months is the coyote. Since January 1, 2011, there have been approximately 14 reported sightings within the city limits. On at least 2 occasions, coyotes are suspected in the deaths of two cats.



Most wildlife encountered within in Santa Monica pose little threat to humans as they have a natural fear of people and are not comfortable in unnatural surroundings. However, urban development, water and food shortages combined with the abundance of food sources within the city, have helped animals such as the coyote to wander out from their natural habitat and further into the city, typically during the late evening and early morning hours.

Based on the more frequent sightings of coyotes, it is important to understand the behaviors and be aware of how to interact with a coyote in the event of contact with wildlife in your neighborhood.

Attached is a reference guide offering tips on how to coexist with local wildlife. Anyone with questions or concerns may contact the Santa Monica Police Department's Animal Control Unit at 310.458.8495

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Living with Wildlife in Santa Monica

Despite the degree of urban development in Santa Monica, various species of wild animals have managed to adapt and develop a niche in our community. The presence of squirrels, possums, and raccoons in many neighborhoods is not uncommon, and in some cases these species may be surprisingly plentiful. Less common are sightings of coyotes, although evidence of their presence surfaces on occasion. Sightings of owls or other raptors are rare but not unheard of.

The **Santa Monica Animal Control Division** offers the following information to enable you to live peacefully with the wildlife community.

Do Not Feed Wildlife

Although we like to think that we are helping wildlife by providing food, the reality is that:

- Supplemental feeding encourages wildlife to become dependent on handouts that are not part of their natural diets.
- Juvenile animals that are taught to depend on humans sometimes never develop normal foraging behavior, and could starve if the artificial food sources are removed.
- Human foods are usually nutritionally inadequate for wildlife and may lead to subsequent health problems.
- Wildlife may lose their fear of humans and pets, a behavior that could result in wild animals not avoiding contact with aggressive dogs and cats, or people who might intentionally harm them.
- Wild animals being fed by humans may congregate in unnaturally high numbers, increasing the chances of disease transmission.

What You Can Do

- Keep garbage in sturdy garbage cans with secure lids. Thoroughly rinse bottles and cans for recycling, and put compost in closed bins instead of in an open compost pile.
- Do not feed your pets outside, or if you must, feed them outside during the day and take food and water bowls inside during the night.
- Pets such as cats, rabbits, and small dogs are easy prey for coyotes. If you suspect the presence of coyotes in your neighborhood, keep these pets indoors. Do not leave small children unattended in areas known to be frequented by coyotes, even in your yard.

Do Not Provide Shelter for Wildlife

Following these precautions will help prevent potential problems and will allow you to peacefully coexist with wildlife.

Deterrents and Scare Tactics

- Spray a little ammonia in your trash can several times a week to cut the odor of food.
- Place moth balls or moth ball cakes in areas where coyotes sleep or hang out to deter them from staying.

- Motion-activated devices such as lights, strobe lights, and sprinklers can be useful.
- Use radios that are set to talk or news stations to help deter the coyotes.
- Use a Coyote Shaker:
 - A can containing a few coins which can be shaken and thrown at the coyote.
- Throw balls or rocks. Bang two pans together, blow a whistle, use an air horn, or use a high-pressure water sprayer.
- Alternate the deterrents to prevent the coyote from getting used to one method.

Common Q&A

What should I do if a coyote approaches me?

- Wave your arms. Shout in a low, loud tone. Throw objects at the coyote while maintaining eye contact.
- Make yourself look as big as possible; if you are wearing a jacket, open it up like a cape. If possible, go towards active or populated areas, but do not turn your back on the coyote.

How can I keep my dog safe?

- If you live in coyote country, closely supervise your dog.
- Walk your dog on a leash at all times and stay close to high-pedestrian traffic areas.
- Try not to establish a regular routine and route to avoid setting up a pattern for the coyote to detect.
- Avoid bushy areas or paths near abandoned properties.
- If you notice a coyote when walking your dog, keep your dog as close to you as possible and move towards an active area.
- Never encourage or allow your dog to interact or “play” with coyotes.

Some of the above information was obtained from the City of Los Angeles Animal Services. For questions or concerns, please contact the Santa Monica Police Department’s Animal Control Unit at 310.458.8495.