

An Exclusive Monthly Publication for La Cañada Flintridge

La Cañada Flintridge

NEIGHBORS

February 2016

Meet the
Coyotes



Best Version Media

Cover photo by Kees Hollemans & Iris van Noort



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Content Due.....	Issue Month
November 21	January
December 21	February
January 21	March
February 21	April
March 21	May
April 21	June
May 21	July
June 21	August
July 21	September
August 21	October
September 21.....	November
October 21	December

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Publisher's Note

As readers of this magazine know, we like to feature the families and neighbors who in their own unique way contribute to the character and fabric of *La Cañada Flintridge*. You can be assured that this tradition of celebrating families is going to continue. However, we thought that in this issue, it might be interesting to showcase another kind of neighbor who is an integral part of our community.

I am speaking, of course, about the coyotes that are ever present in our neighborhood. The thing is they live here too and they don't plan on leaving any time soon. Even though they would prefer to have nothing to do with us, our beautiful suburban environment coupled with the immediate access to the wilds of nature make La Canada just as perfect a setting for coyotes as it is for us.

Their presence among us brings many questions along with plenty of animated neighborhood conversations following the latest coyote sighting or the heartbreaking loss of a pet. Through stunning photography and insightful expert commentary, this article hopefully can shine a light on this highly intelligent and adaptable predator who lives in our midst.



All the best,

Sky Sprowles

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Dear Residents,

February is upon us and with that comes Valentine's Day, a tradition that may have begun somewhere in Ancient Rome. Supposedly, the Romans held a three day fertility festival, where a lottery method was used for matchmaking. Needless to say, things have changed. Although, I am still not certain of the precise origins of the holiday, we know that today the overarching theme is romance and love.

Love comes in many different shapes and sizes. The love you have for a friend is different from the love you have for a significant other. The love between a parent and child is unlike the love shared between siblings. The common thread among all these is that deep level of care you feel for one another.

Modern love is abbreviated, it comes in a text, an email, or even a photo on social media. Maureen Sprowles reminds us about the lost art of writing love letters. Janielu Murphy shares her experiences and feelings on love. She explains how courageous it is to love regardless of the outcome.



Thank you to our many readers and contributors, and Happy Valentine's Day!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Wiley

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Meet the Coyotes



Photo Credit: Kees Hollemans & Iris van Noort

By J. Schuyler Sprowles

All residents of La Canada Flintridge sooner or later become acutely aware that along with the great schools, a wonderful quality of life and our small town atmosphere is the fact that we live squarely in the middle of “Coyote Country.” Our numerous hiking and horse trails, wooded canyons, bucolic neighborhood roads and cul-de-sacs offer an ideal environment for coyotes to feed, mate and raise a family. Therein lies the tension between people, pet owners and coyotes, a North American native animal that wildlife experts say is the country’s

most misunderstood and maligned predator.

The Coyote is a species that is widely considered to be the most persecuted carnivore in North America, where it is estimated that a half million coyotes are killed every year either through government programs or at the hands of private individuals. Despite these eradication efforts, **Project Coyote** maintains that coyotes have expanded their range through-out much of North America, aided by extirpation of wolves, alteration and transformation of habitat and urban sprawl. Humanized landscapes have worked to the coyote’s advantage

by offering an abundance of food, water, and shelter. Unfortunately, intentional and unintentional feeding of coyotes has also resulted in increased encounters and conflicts. How communities address such conflicts generates impassioned debate.

The Challenge of Cohabitation with Coyotes

Camilla Fox, Founder and Executive Director of Project Coyote, a national organization dedicated to coexistence between people and wildlife through education, science and advocacy says, “There is much work to be done. Our belief is that if we can shift the way we

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view and treat coyotes, we can shift the way we view and treat all predators. One of the greatest challenges is risk perception. People are fearful of predators and the more urban we become the more separate we view ourselves from the wild and particularly from wild nature and predators. Another challenge is a general lack of public awareness and understanding of why wildlife and wild lands matter. We risk ending up as a society of people who live in urban landscapes completely disconnected from the wild,” says Fox. For instance, Fox points out, “Coyotes are excellent rodent controllers. They also serve to naturally limit species like skunks, snakes, raccoons, etc., through competition. In doing so, the presence of coyotes can benefit ground and songbird populations whose bird eggs and nestlings otherwise take a heavy toll from these smaller mesocarnivores. Moreover, as omnivores and scavengers,



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coyotes help keep ecosystems clean of carrion.”

Making Pet Owners Aware

Dr. Woody Walker, D.V.M. Owner of La Canada Pet Clinic, has practiced veterinary medicine in La Canada over 34 years and has treated numerous injuries to pets resulting from coyote encounters. He makes it a point to counsel new pet owners and new residents to the

community that coyotes live here too and if they want to keep their cats and dogs out of harm’s way, they need to be responsible pet owners and consider the wild nature of the environment in which they live.

Dr. Walker recalled a story involving a new client who had just moved to town from Pittsburg, PA. He came into the Pet Clinic with his small white dog. Dr. Walker learned that his new client had

just bought a home near the LCF Country Club. His routine before going to work each morning was to open the front door and let his dog out so she could run around outside before being locked in the house all day. Dr. Walker advised his new client, “Letting your dog run around on her own is a bad idea. There are many coyotes in the area, especially near the golf course.” The pet owner didn’t take his new veterinarian seriously and even

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made a joking reference to cartoon character Wile E. Coyote before leaving.

The following morning before letting his dog out, the man went to get his newspaper and came face to face with a coyote in his driveway! Needless to say, he didn't let the dog out that morning and later excitedly phoned Dr. Walker to commend him on his knowledge of the neighborhood. Seeing this as a teaching moment, Dr. Walker told his client, "This

coyote in the driveway was no mere coincidence. He was waiting for your dog. He knew your morning routine." There were no further Wile E. Coyote jokes.

Erin Vega and Adrianna Elihu of the Pasadena Humane Society are members of the Wildlife Team at the animal shelter and they acknowledge that it is often difficult to explain to pet owners and residents who call expressing concerns regarding coyotes, that animal control

agencies cannot simply launch a coyote extermination or relocation program. Even if there were resources available for such efforts, the programs have proven to be largely ineffective. In the face of costly trapping programs and eradication efforts, the exceptionally adaptable coyote overcomes the odds by exhibiting age-old survival techniques such as giving birth to pups in greater numbers and the emergence of floater coyotes who

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John Harrison.



quickly move into new feeding areas with others following close behind. Erin and Adrianna readily agree that further community education is key to fostering coexistence between coyotes and people.

Vital Coyote Statistics compiled by The Humane Society of the United States

Diet: small mammals, rodents, insects,

reptiles, fruit and carrion

Breeding: The female bears one litter of 3 – 9 puppies a year, usually in April or May when food is abundant. The gestation period is 63 – 65 days

Age When Independent: The pups live and play in the den until they are 6 – 10 weeks old, when the mother starts

taking them out in a hunting group. The family gradually disbands, and by fall the pups are usually hunting alone. Within a year, they go their own way, staking out territory, marked with the scent of their urine.

Howling: Communication with others in the area. Also, an announcement that “I am here and this is my area.”

Yelping: A celebration or criticism within a small group of coyotes. Often heard during play among pups.

Barking: Thought to be a threat display when a coyote is protecting a den or a kill

As La Canadians well know, coyotes may prey on unsupervised cats and small dogs, since these animals are similar in size to their natural prey. Solutions to these conflicts can frequently be found in simple alterations to human behavior. Here is a list compiled by **Project Coyote, California Fish & Wildlife and LA City Dept. of Animal Services:**

- Never feed or attempt to feed coyotes
- Do not leave pets outside unattended
- Install motion sensitive lighting around house
- Trim ground-level shrubbery to reduce hiding spots

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- Be aware that coyotes are more active in the spring when feeding and protecting their young
- If followed by a coyote, make loud noises. If this fails, throw rocks in the animal's direction
- Use a Coyote Shaker: (A can containing a few coins which can be shaken or thrown)
- Don't leave bowls of pet food or water outside overnight
- Keep garbage in a sturdy container with tight fitting lid
- Don't place garbage bins out at the curb until the morning of scheduled pickup
- Compost in enclosed bins instead of exposed piles
- Ensure bird feeders do not overflow (coyotes are attracted to both the birdseed and the rodents who are attracted to the birdseed)
- Keep all pets inside at night
- Spay or neuter your dogs
- Provide secure enclosures for rabbits, poultry, etc., using heavy gage wire
- Vegetable gardens should be protected with heavy-duty garden fences
- Make sure your yard fences are more than six feet high with tops facing outward at a 45-degree angle and bury bottom of fence at least 12 to 18 inches underground
- Close off crawl spaces under porches, decks and sheds. (Coyotes can use for hiding)
- Pick low hanging fruit and all fallen fruit
- Ask your neighbors to follow these tips

As Project Coyote's, Camilla Fox stresses, "Time and again, coyotes have proven themselves remarkably resilient

animals. It's little wonder that the Navajo Indians called this cunning and resourceful species 'God's dog.' If we're smart, we'll recognize that coyotes have much to offer us, not only by keeping ecosystems healthy and diverse, but also by providing inspiring examples of ingenuity and adaptability in an ever-changing world."

Despite all efforts to the contrary, coyotes are here to stay and it is important for us to learn how to effectively coexist with our wild and resourceful neighbors.

For more information about coyotes and how to coexist with them, visit **Project Coyote** (www.ProjectCoyote.org)

Do you know a neighbor who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at jwiley@bestversionmedia.com

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