

COYOTES

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In case you haven't heard, on the morning of Tuesday, May 19th, one of our neighbors, whose home abuts John Chestnut Park, discovered the mutilated body of a deer. Florida Wildlife was contacted and determined that the deer had been attacked by at least 2 coyotes. The injuries sustained were indicative of coyote behavior. It is believed that the coyotes live in John Chestnut Park, and normally hunt at night, although they can be seen during day as they are not nocturnal. Evidently, the deer was unaware of their presence and could not fend for itself.

I contacted Florida Wildlife regarding coyotes and they provided a wealth of information that will be posted on the clubhouse bulletin board. In the meantime, here are some FAQs worth reading:

- DO NOT feed wild animals. Once they become aware of this practice, they will become used to being fed and not use their own resources.
- Coyotes are generally not a threat to people; they are curious but timid animals and will generally run away if challenged. If approached by a coyote, back away slowly and yell. Running from a coyote could cause the animal to chase. Use hazing techniques (such as yelling, throwing rocks, using air horns or other noisemakers, etc.) to scare coyotes away to maintain their natural wariness of people. Commercially available deterrent products include motion-activated sprinklers, alarms, and lighting devices.
- Coyotes are opportunistic, generalist feeders. They have been known to feed on rodents, rabbits, raccoons, lizards, snakes, insects, white-tailed deer fawns, small wild pigs, grasses, fruit (watermelon, persimmons and wild berries), grains, fish, trash, pet food, bird seed and carrion. They have also been known to prey on livestock (mainly calves and sheep) **and pets**. Coyotes are more active at dawn and dusk (crepuscular), but can be seen anytime during the day or night.
- Coyotes naturally prey on smaller animals, so they can and do prey on cats and small dogs.

To prevent interactions with pets:

- Pets should **not** roam freely. Cats should be kept indoors and small dogs should be walked on a short leash, especially at night, dusk or dawn.
- People should use caution when walking pets in wooded areas or near heavy foliage, as these are areas where coyotes could den or rest
- If pets are kept in a fenced area outside, the fence should be high enough (about 6 feet) so that coyotes cannot easily jump over and the bottom of the fence should be checked regularly to ensure that coyotes cannot crawl underneath.

It is hoped that with the information provided above, we will be able to live peacefully with these animals.

For more information, you can log on to the following websites:

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission "*Coyote Fast Facts*"

Humane Society of US "*Coyote Hazing Guidelines*"

University of Florida "*Co-existing with Coyotes*"