

## Columnists

### **Mee beep! Don't run from coyotes**

By Esther Baird

Wed Mar 25, 2009, 04:39 PM EDT

BEVERLY, MASS. -

It happened at 10:30 p.m. at the intersection of Cabot Street and 1A. We were stopped at the light between Henry's and the firehouse when there was a blur to my left. No, it was two blurs! Two big and bushy blurs running through the intersection and through the beams of our headlights.

My husband I both yelled, "Coyotes!"

I'd been hoping to see coyotes for some time and I wasn't about to lose my chance: "Quick follow them!"

My husband turned down the street in pursuit but they were gone. We pattered around the block peering into the darkness, when suddenly they burst from behind a house, dashed across the front lawn, leapt around some trashcans and disappeared back down another alley. I was thrilled. I'd finally seen the Coyotes of Beverly.

Because, oh yes, our city has coyotes. I guess we always have, but recently it seems like there have been a spate of sightings among my friends and neighbors. Now that I could finally join the ranks, I needed to know more. I picked up the phone and called Beverly's Animal Control Officer Jim Lindley, whose job loyalty, regular readers of my column may recall, de-skunked the bathrooms at Lynch Park two summers ago.

I asked him if we had a coyote uprising on our hands. We don't. But we do have three coyotes, two of which are a breeding pair. As such, they bred themselves five kits last year. Lindley explained to me that generally after a year the young coyotes take off on their own and that, "in a given day a single coyote may range anywhere between 15 and 20 miles — so you may have a sighting in Wenham and in Beverly and yet it's just one coyote."

So maybe we didn't have an uprising, but I still seemed to be hearing about coyotes a lot. And not just at night. Apparently it's not that uncommon for coyotes to come out in broad daylight to look for food, "Especially," said Lindley — and here I'd like thank the coyotes for illustrating the understatement of the year — "when it's been a hard winter."

He went on: "You know two years ago, we had a female coyote who took a daily tour down Lothrop street to raid people's tomato plants. They'll eat almost anything including rats and mice and of course, if it's very easy, a small dog or cat, though that's really uncommon."

Tell that to my friend whose cat, Milo, apparently looked a bit too much like a tomato. Nevertheless, the whole idea of coyotes in Beverly felt exciting and adventurous to me. Our exciting beachside city with its tomato-loving coyotes.

Of course it's all fun and thrills until you are out walking with your husband and two young daughters in downtown Beverly, on what we like to call a mild Saturday — when in fact it was simply cold — and you get stopped by a police officer.

The officer, recently off duty, slowed his truck down and leaned out his window. We were, to be honest, walking in the street since the sidewalk was buried in a never-melting snow. Was that now against the law? I resigned myself to a reprimand.

Instead, the officer said, "Hi folks, hope you're enjoying your walk. I just wanted to let you know that in the past hour there have been quite a few calls about coyotes right in this section of town."

Now that's something I hadn't expected. We were walking on Atlantic, Washington and Lovett streets. Just two blocks from Cabot of all places — it was downright busy.

“Really? What are they doing?” I asked the officer.

“Just running around, probably foraging for food.”

I eyed the donuts we'd just purchased.

The officer continued: “If you see one, don't run. Stand still and make a really loud noise.”

Well, how fortuitous my husband and I agreed, that our two girls are nothing if not loud.

Officer Lindley gave the same instructions: “It's really just good policy to carry a whistle if you walk in wooded areas and to always stand still if you see a coyote or a strange dog of any size — even a Chihuahua.”

I thought of Gus, my friend's abnormally, fat Chihuahua. I bet that if I ran Gus would just hope I brought back a biscuit, but I took Lindley's advice to heart.

I still think coyotes are more exciting than anything else. That said, my tomatoes merely died from neglect last summer and not from the uprising — I mean — the very few Coyotes of Beverly.

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