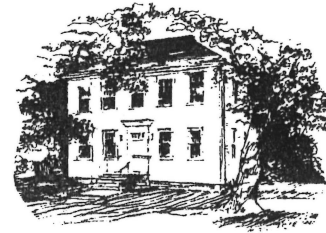


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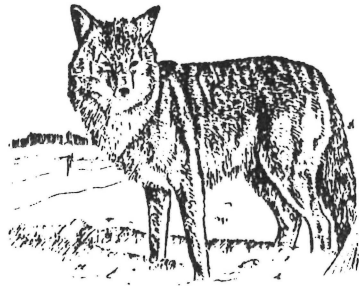
. . . then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

Coyotes in our Midst



When Europeans first came to North America, the coyote's domain was limited to the area west of the Mississippi River but as settlement spread, coyotes moved east. Now they thrive throughout the Western Hemisphere—even with reports of two in Manhattan's Central Park in 1995. Residents of Indian Hill reported an increased presence of coyotes in recent years, and this controversial mammal has become an established part of the fauna of the village.

The coyote's scientific name *Canis latrans* translates as "barking dog". Related to wolves, foxes, jackals, and dogs, coyotes share common

characteristics with them (long narrow muzzles, erect ears, slender limbs, and bushy tails.) Coyotes vary in size and color and weigh 20 – 50 pounds, are about 2 feet high at the shoulders, and 4 feet long, including a tail length of about 1 foot. They can be distinguished from Red Foxes by size, as foxes weigh 12 – 15 pounds.

Coyotes were called "little brother" by the Navajo and Apache, were part of many Aztec legends and symbols in carvings, were considered to be extremely powerful, and were honored by other western tribes in coyote dances. Mark Twain, wrote: "The coyote is a living breathing allegory of Want...always poor, out of luck, and friendless. The meanest creatures despise him, and even the fleas would desert him for a velocipede." Twentieth century Roadrunner cartoons starring Wile E. Coyote captured the current American perception of the coyote as a clever predator.

One of the most adaptable animals in the world, the coyote has expanded his habitat dramatically. Keen senses of smell, hearing and vision – and speed – help the species survive. Also coyote fur usually blends with seasonal surroundings. Coyotes are thought to be monogamous, and in the spring produce a litter of 3 – 7 pups, whelped and raised in a concealed den, which is used for several years. Families stay together until fall, when the young find their own territories. Nocturnal eaters, coyotes adjust their diet to the available food source (fruits, grasses, insects, vegetables, small mammals, scat of other animals, reptiles, road kill, fish, and some large mammals.) The "song dog's" long howl is an unforgettable trademark, piercing the night with its haunting wail. Coyotes howl to signal others, warn of danger, or just for pleasure; but they yip and bark as well.

Thought by some to be a menace, coyotes are despised by ranchers who lose livestock to them. For several decades coyotes in western states were culled by trapping and poisoning, but they survived efforts at eradication. Believed by biologists to have an important part in the ecosystem, they perform an important function in the food chain..

Occasionally Rangers (on night patrol) have seen coyotes crossing Village roads. They resemble collie dogs, and their long bushy tail is a distinguishing characteristic. Foxes are smaller and more feline in manner. These few sightings have occurred near uninhabited Green Area lands. Some residents with livestock believe that coyotes have preyed upon their herds, but as reclusive as coyotes are, it is difficult to be certain. The Rangers have had a few reports that small animals have disappeared; and recommend fencing livestock, escorting small pets after dark, and not leaving pet food available at night outside.

In 1999 the Rangers provided a series of articles in the Bulletin to educate residents about coyotes. While there is an established local population, there are not large numbers of coyotes. This reclusive mammal will most likely be present in the years to come—but due to his evasiveness will not be visible to most residents. Yet he is a survivor.

Special thanks to Captain John Cresie for assistance with this article.