

Village of North Bay Town Hall Meeting
Thursday, May 29th, 2025 | 7:00 PM | Village Hall

Minutes prepared by President Mark Schall

Attendees: Tony Veranth, Ken Brewer, Jim Toniolo, Bruce Pepich

Guest Speaker: Dr. David Drake

Professor and Extension Wildlife Specialist

Lead Researcher UW Urban Canid Project

Ph.D. Forestry North Carolina State University

The UW Urban Canid Project (UWUCP) is studying red foxes and coyotes in Madison, WI. The project aims to investigate the way canids are living in Madison and how we can coexist with these wild neighbors.

Coyote and fox sightings in urban areas are increasing.

The UW Urban Canid Project seeks to learn about these animals for several reasons. Traditionally, much of the knowledge and research on foxes and coyotes has been from rural or wild settings. With urbanization continually increasing, the UWUCP studies how these animals use the urban landscape and how their life histories and behaviors change as a result. A big part of this involves their relationship with humans. The UWUCP aims to better understand these urban adapters so that citizens and wildlife managers alike can be more proactive in how they respond to these animals. More knowledge and understanding will lead to less conflicts.

To study these urban canines, animals are live-trapped and radio-collared. These collars allow researchers to remotely monitor the animals' locations without having to see or disturb them. Collecting location data over a long period of time allows researchers to better understand where animals are spending their time and what factors may be drawing them there. Blood, nasal, and fecal samples are also collected to analyze what diseases are prevalent in the fox and coyote populations in Madison.

Understanding the health of these canines can have direct implications when it comes to the health of domestic animals.

The coyote is a member of the dog family, along with foxes and wolves. This medium-sized canid bears a close resemblance to a small German shepherd with a brown-gray coat and whitish belly. Adults typically weigh between 25 and 40 pounds but some larger individuals can weigh up to 50 pounds or more. Coyotes have a dark band that runs down the back and onto the tail, which is tipped in black.

Coyotes can be active at any time during the day but are generally most active at sunset and in the early morning and may have periods of activity during the night. In developed areas, coyotes tend to be mostly nocturnal whereas coyotes in natural areas tend to be active during the day (diurnal) or at dawn and dusk (crepuscular). Coyotes tend to move through urban areas using corridors such as railroad tracks or underpasses to avoid human and vehicle traffic, but the convenience of sidewalks and roads through towns further pushes the advantage of nocturnal behavior.

Wild coyotes have a life expectancy of around 3 years. The most common cause of death in urban coyotes is vehicle collisions. While urban coyotes have adapted to living in close proximity to roads, vehicle collisions still contribute heavily to mortality.

This is the best advice for avoiding conflict. Animals that associate people with food become more curious and dependent on humans while losing their natural fear. Feeding pets indoors and properly containing trash is crucial to avoiding conflict with canids. When bird feeding, regularly collect fallen seed to avoid attracting rodents, a favorite prey item of fox and coyotes.

Keep an eye on pets while outdoors and do not let them off-leash in areas known to hold wild canids, especially coyotes. Dogs should be monitored while outdoors, especially at night. Cats should always be kept indoors. While dangerous conflict between pets/wild canids is rare, it is a real possibility, especially during breeding/pupping season.

It is important that urban canids maintain their natural fear of humans. If an animal is not behaving normally, we recommend hazing techniques to minimize the chance of conflict. Techniques include yelling, clapping, and throwing objects in the direction of the

animal (see video below). These aggressive acts help to naturally re-instill a fear of humans.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIC8KTDiIRs&fbclid=IwY2xjawK2XvIleHRuA2FibQIxMQBicmlkETFhYXZacENDNHJLOGtOdnN2AR7mEoQyJEpHDzXRLmsh5I8dJP2pEK3CMgLRcCvflyR_yYXi74DxT8Y2sVFIHA_aem_1Q7dpNRGVy4G0QnhsphioQ

Mutual respect is the best way to peacefully coexist with urban canids. Most people live in close contact with canids their whole lives without knowing it. Our actions shaped their adaptation to this urban landscape and will continue to shape them going forward. Respecting these wild neighbors will help to foster a community of peaceful coexistence.

Trapping or killing coyotes is largely ineffective and should be considered a last resort. Lethal control depends on marking a repeatedly aggressive coyote. Removing a coyote usually results in a new coyote moving in to replace it. Coyotes also possess a unique reproductive mechanism to adjust for declines in population.

The most effect way of managing coyote issues is prevention by removing food sources and avoid contact with pets.