

Residents warn of heavy coyote presence in east Aurora



By Brock Weir

Residents in Aurora's northeast quadrant are urging caution following an increase in coyote sightings in new developments.

Earlier this month, Jamie Kidder had just finished cleaning his garage around 10.30 a.m. when he sat down in a lawn chair to relax with a cup of coffee.

Shortly after he had a sip or two, he says he saw a coyote walk up the street, across his neighbour's driveway the two had "a little eye-to-eye" contact about three feet from his garage door.

Mr. Kidder, a resident in Aurora's 2C development just north of the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex at Leslie and Wellington, trains dogs and says he has an understanding of canine behaviour, and with the wild dog staring back at him, Mr. Kidder could tell he was hungry.

"We had some non-verbal communication and he decided that me being the big animal in my cave, it wasn't a good idea to try and get food, but down the street a guy was walking a small dog and [the coyote] toddled down the road to get him. I intervened and the owner got his dog up from the ground and I basically walked the coyote out of the neighbourhood."

Immediately after the encounter, Mr. Kidder called the Town to report his sighting -- but it was far from the last.

There was nothing later that day, a Tuesday.

Nor was there anything on Wednesday and Thursday.

That all changed, however, on the Friday. It was garbage day in the neighbourhood. When he was heading out earlier that morning, he didn't see much damage to the garbage left out by neighbours the night before, but when he came back around 11 a.m., he found a hungry female coyote shredding a garbage bag on the side of the street.

That same day, I talked to a guy who has a small dog who said the night before he had to beat the coyote off his dog with a hockey stick, says Mr. Kidder. I then talked to the neighbours because they have small children and dogs, letting them know to be aware. But the biggest issue came last Saturday when my girlfriend and I were getting ready to head downtown. It was 3 p.m. and she saw a coyote running near the end of the street. Of course, she went straight into the house. There was a party of six or seven people kitty corner to our backyard and there were a couple of small dogs and four or five kids playing in another backyard on the opposite side. When I went into the backyard, I saw the coyote near the kids and there was an adult there basically trying to shoo the coyote away.

Later, the coyote headed in the direction of the party with the little dogs. With the party-goers warned to get the dogs inside, they scrambled when they saw the coyote.

There were a couple of little dogs running around quickly, people running after them. The coyote went into full predatory mode -- ears flat, back flat -- and started coming in, not looking at me, but looking past me to try and figure out how to get in, grab a dog and run away. I had to get as big as I could, roar at the coyote until it decided it wasn't a good idea to try and get by me. Once they are moving away, if you keep moving towards them they will keep moving away. I shuffled it out of the neighbourhood.

Jamie Kidder isn't the only resident warning of coyotes.

Another neighbour, Alex Choy, says his small white dog Lua was attacked by two coyotes in their backyard.

The incident, he says, was witnessed by their 13 year old daughter, who subsequently had a panic attack.

In front of the building where I live, there is construction going on and I believe the coyotes have lost their natural habitat, says Mr. Choy, noting his pup is recovering from surgery resulting from the coyote attack.

Mr. Kidder agrees with Mr. Choy's

assessment of the impact swift development has had on the situation.

?The problem is with the development of residential neighbourhoods reducing wildlife space, unfortunately, and this is my opinion, when we do make these communities one after the other, trying to keep a small, natural wildlife area in the middle is not going to end up good,? he says. ?How many years ago did people used to hunt black wolves and bears right here in the Aurora area? Why are they gone? I don't have anything against the coyotes, I am a dog lover, a canine guy, but they are predatory animals and nobody wants to do anything. The Town won't, Animal Control won't, MNR won't and YRP basically explained that if somebody is being attacked, call, and they will send the police over to shoot the dog. It seems kind of ... nobody wants to be the bad guy, but just like bears, wolfs and mountain lions, every other animal that is predatory to humans, that we have moved out of our residential areas, coyotes seem to hang around like raccoons but they are not -- these are predatory dogs and they will go after kids.

?It is going to be an unfortunate situation.?