

Coyote

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California, Colorado, New York and Illinois.”

The animals like to eat fruit, but “anywhere you have large deer populations, you’re likely to have dense populations of coyotes,” said Rich Wolfe, a Conservation Agency project manager assigned to the NBCS.

Mitchell noted that “the coyotes’ favorite food is woodchuck – and you won’t find many woodchucks in Jamestown anymore.”

Conversely, she added, coyotes control their own numbers when food is in short supply by expelling members from the pack, breeding less or not at all, and reducing birth numbers through fetal resorption in pregnant females. If food becomes abundant again, the pack will halt the downsizing behaviors.

Serious local concerns

One of the intentional food subsidies that led to serious local concerns occurred when Navy gate guards started feeding the pack inhabiting the base. One of

the female coyotes, having learned that humans hand out food, left the base and tried to raise her family on the Cliff Walk – eventually relocating to Park Holm – where, sure enough, people offered food. The coyotes became so comfortable around humans in Park Holm that mothers would not allow their children to go out trick-or-treating.

“Anytime you feed coyotes, they become emboldened,” Mitchell said, noting she isn’t surprised by reports of coyotes standing outside the doors of peoples’ homes. “All the coyotes are saying is, ‘What do you have for me today?’ Those are the animals that are ‘problem coyotes’ – the ‘bad’ ones. Some of the ‘bad’ ones are individuals that were forced out of their packs and have to fend for themselves, but most of this ‘bad’ behavior is learned from people feeding them.”

The coyotes in the Navy pack were some of the boldest on the two islands; in fact, Mitchell said, much of the pack started exploring Miantonomi Park in 2006, frightening the residents.

“It’s so important to get the

Navy on board [with the management plan],” Mitchell said, adding that she would be meeting with officials this week.

Besides limiting the availability of human food subsidies, road kill and farm carcasses, the Coyote Coexistence Plan also recommends the following measures to manage coyote populations:

- Enacting a Municipal Undomesticated Animal Feeding ordinance, which would only allow people to feed feral cats as long as “feeding occurs during daylight on elevated platforms ... and that food remains on the platform no longer than 20 minutes per day.”

- Making coyotes feel unwelcome at all times “by people acting ‘big, mean and loud,’” as a coexistence program in Vancouver, B.C. advises.

- Educating people about safe coexistence with the information provided at such websites as the coyote pages maintained by the Conservation Agency (www.theconservationagency.org/coyote.htm) and the Department of Environmental Management (www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fish-wild/pdf/coyotes.pdf).



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