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UC Web Site Helps Homeowners Avoid Coyote Problems

A new Web site has been created by a University of California wildlife specialist to assist homeowners in preventing and solving conflicts with suburban coyotes. CoyoteBytes.org provides information about coyotes in urban and suburban environments, giving specific management recommendations.

Residents of Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties can also report coyote attacks or encounters via the site. In the future, they will be able to view a map that shows where reported attacks occurred. UC scientists will compile and analyze this information to better define the scope of the coyote problem in these counties, and to improve their recommendations for preventing and solving future coyote conflicts.

Coyotes in recent years have become increasingly bold in many locations throughout the West. They have injured or killed pets, as well as bit children and adults, according to UC Cooperative Extension wildlife specialist Robert M. Timm. The abundance of food, water, and shelter available in suburban environments draws the wily animals into residential neighborhoods, where they soon learn that most humans are not a threat. Once comfortable in suburbia, some coyotes become proficient in attacking domestic cats and small dogs as prey.

Information on the CoyoteBytes.org Web site provides homeowners and municipal authorities recommendations on ways to make neighborhoods less inviting to coyotes, and how to protect pets from coyote attack.

Recommendations include the following:

Thin vegetation to reduce coyotes' ability to use it to approach humans or pets unseen, and avoid planting landscaping that produces fruits and seeds that coyotes may find attractive.

Keep pets such as cats and small dogs indoors. If pets go outdoors, keep them in tightly fenced yards or kennels, where they are protected against coyote attack.

When walking dogs, use a leash and avoid areas of heavy vegetation. Vary your route and time of day so that coyotes will not learn to predict your routine and lie in wait.

Never intentionally feed coyotes or allow them access to pet food, compost piles, or household refuse. Intentional feeding is believed to cause some coyotes to become unusually aggressive, which puts both children and adults at risk of attack.

CoyoteBytes.org provides links to useful publications that explain the coyote's biology and behavior in detail, as well as providing specific guidelines on how to deal with coyotes that come into conflict with people and their activities. Visitors to the site are invited to submit photos or short video clips of suburban coyotes to the CoyoteBytes.org photo gallery.

The website design and data management functions of CoyoteBytes.org have been developed by Karin Tuxen-Bettman and Maggi Kelly at UC Berkeley. Other project cooperators include Ray Smith of the L.A. County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, and Terry Salmon, Extension Wildlife Specialist and County Director in San Diego County.

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