

Resident says Glen Abbey coyote has lost its fear of humans

By Nathan Howes
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

A former head of the Toronto Humane Society is calling on the Town to take action following a close encounter with a coyote outside his Glen Abbey home.

"I think it's unfortunate, but the only solution you have for this particular coyote that has now lost fear of humans is for the animal to be basically trapped and dispatched, effectively killed," said Jack Slibar, who was CEO of the Toronto Humane Society from 1997-2002.

"I don't say it lightly, (but) when an ani-

Former Toronto Humane Society CEO calls on Town to take action

mal loses a fundamental fear of humans, it's a recipe for disaster, whereby the animal becomes bolder and a disastrous animal encounter is just around the corner."

Last week Slibar was standing on the driveway of his Montrose Avenue home with a contractor sealing his driveway around 8:30 p.m., when he saw what appeared to be a dog walking without a leash. As the animal neared, Slibar realized the animal was a coyote.

"It was initially maybe 20 or 30 yards away and then it got as close as five yards. I said to myself, 'that's not a dog, that's a coy-

ote,'" said Slibar. "I was a little taken back because there was an individual who was walking maybe 40 metres behind it and I initially thought it was someone who had their dog off their leash."

Slibar estimated the coyote weighed about 60 pounds.

He said it walked up his neighbour's driveway across the street. Slibar shouted at it to get it to leave, but to no avail.

"The coyote simply stopped, turned around, took a couple of paces towards me, looked at us for maybe 15 or 20 seconds and then proceeded to cross the street towards our side of the street," said Slibar. "(It) simply continued up Montrose Avenue."

This was the first time Slibar encountered a coyote outside his home.

Slibar is aware of other media reports of coyote encounters in north Oakville. He believes the situation has now reached a point beyond just education, and is calling for drastic measures to be taken against this particular coyote.

Slibar wants the Town to take action by hiring a professional trapper to remove the animal from the residential area. He sent a letter to Mayor Rob Burton, members of Town Council and Town directors Chris Mark (parks and open space), and Cindy Toth (environmental policy).

"I'm not anti-wildlife in Oakville; I think that's one of the nice things about Oakville. There are foxes around, there are hawks, and there are all sorts of wonderful wildlife in Oakville," said Slibar. "But the majority of that wildlife has a natural fear of humans and tries to stay away from humans."

When Slibar received a response from the Town, he knew right away why the coyotes were becoming desensitized around humans – some of the residents were feeding them, he said.

"This is one of those situations unfortunately, whereby well-intentioned residents who are trying to feed an animal, according to what the city is suggesting, is creating a situation where ultimately the animal needs to be destroyed," said Slibar.

Other alternatives such as relocating the animal aren't an option because of the potential for spreading disease, and it would also just move the problem to another town, not eliminate it, Slibar said.

"(When) taking an animal from Oakville and translocating it someplace else, all you're really doing is placing it in a different territory of another animal, which is going to cause conflicts with that population," said Slibar.

Amanda Barrett, manager of animal protective services for Oakville & Milton Humane Society (OMHS), said the society is only contracted by the Town to deal with sick and injured wildlife. Humane society officers aren't equipped or trained to deal with them in this case, nor do they have the license to house them, she said.

Ron Allen, Ministry of Natural Resources



OAKVILLE BEAVER FILE PHOTO

Coyote in north Oakville.

area supervisor for York Durham responded by email stating The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (FWCA) sets out the legal actions property owners may take to deal with problem wildlife.

"Landowners or their agents may capture, kill, or harass certain species of problem wildlife, including coyotes, to prevent damage to their property at any time. This would include municipalities on municipally-owned land," said Allen. "Landowners are responsible for managing problem animals on their property."

The ministry is responsible for legislation governing trapping activities, including restrictions on types of traps used. A licensed trapper experienced in the urban environment would present little or no risk to the public, Allen said.

"The trapper may capture a problem coyote with the use of an approved trap or may humanely kill the coyote using a firearm," said Allen. "In both circumstances authority from the municipality may be required if there are municipal by-laws in place that prohibit the use of traps or firearms."

Under the authority of a small game or trapping license, coyotes are commonly harvested by hunters and trappers throughout southern Ontario, Allen said.

The humane society currently has a trap out in Glen Abbey for another coyote, Barrett said, that apparently has a gaping wound on its back, which appears to have mange.

Slibar said encounters are going to continue even if this particular coyote or small pack it may be associated with is removed, but the key is to ensure all social interaction between humans and coyotes are eliminated.

"There's no question you're going to have coyotes in the Town of Oakville, it's a habitat conducive to them and they're going to live here. The problem is when a particular animal gets socialized or accepting of human interaction," said Slibar.

"The time has now unfortunately come for the Town to take action and the action is no longer about education. The only responsible thing left to do is to have the animal trapped and dispatched."

Coyote Information Meeting

Anyone interested in learning more can attend a coyote information session on Thursday Sept. 15 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the OE Banquet Hall and Conference Centre on 2245 Speers Rd.

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