

Waking to howls at night

Sometimes there's a good reason to dispatch a coyote, writes Ted Brown



TED BROWN
Column

I'm a really light sleeper. I drift off to sleep by familiar sounds in the old farmhouse, but lately, almost every night that silence has been shattered by howling outside, robbing me of a good night's sleep.

It's coyotes. With the recent crisp, cold nights we've experienced, the sound travels across the fields, making it sound like they are right outside the door.

Living in the rural areas has its advantages, with the solitude and the closeness to nature and wildlife. But the wildlife is becoming more and more brazen.

And we're not limited to coyotes.

In spite of the fact experts maintain there are none in this area, I'm certain there are brush wolves, judging from their size alone. And there's also coydogs (half-breed dogs and coyotes.)

The Ministry Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) reports coyotes have become increasingly brave, less intimidated by humans or dogs.

We've always heard the coyotes at the back of the farm, yipping and howling while chasing a rabbit. But lately, they're much closer.

Years ago, I recall waking one night under a February full moon.

It was so clear, one could see across the field behind

the house.

The howling sounded like six coyotes, but was in fact two as they chased a rabbit across the field.

The rabbit had the edge—he was so light he could run on the top of the snow, while the heavier coyotes broke through the crust in the snow, slowing them down.

Back then I enjoyed that solitary howling of a coyote, but that appeal is gone. Now, after a fresh snowfall I find their tracks right up to the buildings, and see evidence of them pawing at the doors into the barn.

They are attracted to the sheep, and can smell them inside the barn, but they've never been this close before.

Hamish, our border collie, sometimes growls as he's snoozing in the house with us, if he hears them. When The Sidekick and I walk him to the barn at night, we always keep our eyes open and keep him close.

Hamish does his bit, marking every tree on his way to the barn. Male dog urine is one way of discouraging coyotes from coming too close to the buildings. They detect the presence of a dog and are wary of the area.

At the Brown Farm, we are fortunate. Our sheep are housed inside at night—even in summer, and the barn is secure, so the sheep

are safe.

But other farmers haven't been so lucky.

I've heard of coyotes taking down a beef calf or killing lambs with ease. Even farmers with guard animals (dogs, donkeys or llamas) have had losses from coyotes.

Coyotes are wily animals - part of the pack will distract the guard animals while another two or three attack from another angle.

Personally, we've only lost a few barn cats, so I don't complain. But I never let my guard down.

For those with pets living in town, the MNR suggests fencing back yards, keeping garbage in secure containers and not feeding the coyotes.

I don't see MNR suggestions as solutions. It's simply a politically correct way of commenting on a problem, with questionable results. Some northern Ontario municipalities take a harder line, offering bounties on both wolves and coyotes to control their numbers.

Animal rights activists are quick to throw up their hands in horror, but I'm sure they've never seen a lamb or calf carcass torn to bits after being eaten alive by a pack of coyotes, not to mention considering the financial loss to the farmer.

So be forewarned. If you have a dog or a house cat, keep a constant vigil when they go outside to do their "business."

If you don't, there might be a coyote outside your door instead of your pet.

- Ted Brown is a freelance writer for the Georgetown Independent and can be reached at Tedbit@hotmail.com.

THE WAY WE WERE



Esqueusing Historical Society/Photo

In an interesting alteration of a building that was originally a church, this circa 1925 photo shows Ruddy Car Garage and Sign Painting Shop on James Street. Built in 1841, the structure was originally the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and was moved to this site in 1876. After J.S. Ruddy, a Georgetown painter, died in 1931, the building was later used as a lumber shed by J.B. Mackenzie until the end of the 20th century. Text courtesy of Heritage Halton Hills.

Nobody has anything to say about the plight of seniors

The other day I received my old age security pension and I noticed I got a \$1 increase over the previous month. What an insult!

The Liberal government of Ontario mandated the minimum wage be raised to \$14 an hour this year, which works out to a 19.7 per cent increase yet seniors received a raise less than 0.33 per cent. Now

I understand the OAS is a federal matter while the minimum wage is governed by the province yet no one in any of the parties either federally or provincially have anything to say about the plight of seniors.

I have nothing against the minimum wage going up because I feel that everyone has the right to upgrade their lifestyle but I

cannot believe that all politicians have ignored the elderly. We have paid taxes for more than 40 years and are still paying them yet we are forgotten. The cost of living keeps rising but our pension is not keeping up.

It would be a breath of fresh air to hear anyone; Liberal, Conservative or NDP fight on our behalf.

Sergio Barba

Visit our showroom

BuyWise
WINDOWS & DOORS

• your window & door professionals •

11 Mountainview Rd., N. Georgetown, ON L7G 4T3
905.873.0236
www.buy-wise.ca info@buy-wise.ca

• awarded readers choice 27 times •

Furnace Air Conditioning Gaslines Boilers Water Heaters Radiant Heating

Brooks Heating & Air.ca

905-877-3100

NAPOLEON

Local Experts You Know & Trust

proud local dealer of Canadian made products

Speedy Glass

We handle all insurance work.

• Truck Accessories • Upholstery
• Heavy Equipment Glass
• Window Tinting

354 Guelph Street, Georgetown
905-873-1655