

**Bushy-tailed creatures**

# Coyotes still multiplying

**ART BRIGGS-JUDE**  
The recently concluded deer hunt, where many hunters encountered coyotes, once again proves these bushy-tailed creatures are much a part of our local wildlife scene. In many areas they are not only maintaining their numbers but seem to be actually increasing. Yet, except for the odd road kill or car sighting, these grey ghosts drift around the rural parts of southern Ontario unseen by most people. Though similar in size to a large domestic dog, coyotes are infinitely smarter. They have to be to exist in such close proximity to man without the daily handouts made available to the average pooch. The appetite and capacity of a dog the size of a German Shepherd, for example, is well known to those who keep them. The appearance of the coyote in the farming country of this province is an interesting story. In spite of being poisoned, hunted and trapped on the prairies since the 1800s, the coyote expanded its range and today is found in all but the more northern parts of Ontario.

Records show the first known coyote was killed in Lambton County, near Sarnia, in 1919. Then in the late 1920s and early 1930s, pelts of these former prairie inhabitants began showing up at Hudson Bay stores in central Ontario. This eastward expansion continued to follow both the U.S. and Canadian shores of the Great Lakes. Today, most mixed farming areas with a scattering of woodlots, wetlands and heavy hedgerows supports a well-established brush wolf population. The term 'brush wolf,' in relation to these fleet-footed animals, is a name that has some merit. For the coyote has frequently mated with domestic dogs producing a much heavier animal than the original western species and with much more color variation. These first crossbreeds, called "coydogs," are bolder by nature and are often responsible for the predation of sheep and other small livestock. The reproductive rate of coydogs is also much greater than that of coyotes as the hybrids, like dogs, may breed twice a year. Coyotes, on the other hand, have definite breeding cycles, being reproductively active during late January to early March. Thus the potential for a high percentage of hybrids among coyotes, especially in the more southerly counties, is very real. Actually, coyote populations seem to reach a peak about every 10 years, which from my notes and observations means that we are now starting on the downward trend of that cycle. Of course, all forms of wildlife benefit from mild winters and the coyote is no exception. It will be interesting to see if the increase in the deer population affects the usual cycle of the local brush wolves. It is also worthy to note that these grizzly-furred predators have not been a limiting factor in the reintroduction of the wild turkey in Ontario.

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## Santa's staying around

Santa Claus will be staying around the Stouffville area after his appearance this Saturday in the Santa Claus parade. He will appear several times at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library to visit with local children and consider their Christmas wish lists. Santa will appear on the following days at the times specified: Saturday, Dec. 3 from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 10 from 2-3 p.m.; Wednesday, Dec. 14 from 2-3 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 17 from 2-3 p.m.; Wednesday, Dec. 21 from 2-3 p.m. He will be available for photos on his Saturday, Dec. 10 visit and Saturday, Dec. 17.

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