

A Conflict Called Coyote

Thank you to Ethan Kellaway for granting permission for use of the following excerpt from his report “Coyote Encroachment in Greene County: Exploring Human-Coyote Conflicts and Community-led Solutions”.

Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) are a highly adaptable and opportunistic species of omnivorous canines whose origins can be traced back to the Western two-thirds of the United States.¹ When school groups visit The Quarry Farm, students are often asked if they can name wildlife native to Ohio. Every time, someone responds, “Coyote.”

Although they are not native to Ohio, coyotes can be found in all counties. Why are they here? The simple answer is that humans have changed the environment so much that they are here. The gradual reduction of their historic Plains habitat and the fragmentation of forest biomes through human agricultural development, plus the extinction or near-extinction of many of the apex predators (such as wolves and big cats) that were their competition, has allowed coyote populations to expand throughout North and Central America and they can now be found throughout Canada, Mexico, and all U.S. States except for Hawaii.

As a highly adaptable species, coyotes prefer plains and forested areas, but have continued to expand and thrive in many environments.² Coyotes are opportunistic and will seek out what they perceive as the easiest food available, including human garbage, unattended dogs, cats, and pet food. Most coyotes do not prey on domesticated animals unless the pack is under stress.³

As a “nuisance” species, the most common action taken to reduce human-coyote conflicts is population control through lethal methods such as hunting contests, poisoning, and “denning”, where an individual coyote is tracked back to its home territory in order to destroy its den and kill any pups present. Through these and similar methods, hundreds of thousands of coyotes have been killed annually for decades within the United States.

Do lethal methods decrease coyote numbers? The short answer is no. Indiscriminate killing of coyotes stimulates increases in their populations by disrupting their social structure, which encourages more breeding and migration.⁴

Are coyotes at all beneficial? Yes! Coyotes have expanded in part due to a lack of larger predators and have adapted to fill some of the ecological niches those species once occupied. The presence of coyotes in an area limits the populations of



Coyote in a tallgrass prairie (Photo provided by Deb Weston)

smaller carnivores such as foxes, skunks, raccoons, and feral cats. This in turn has been shown to have a positive impact on the diversity and abundance of song- and ground-nesting birds.⁵ While they are omnivorous and will at times go after crops, coyote packs are also known to help local agriculture by keeping the populations of rabbits and rodents in check. A reduction in rodent populations can also help to limit the spread of rodent-borne zoonotic diseases such as hantavirus and plague.⁶ As opportunistic scavengers, coyotes also work to keep communities clean by disposing of carrion.

1 Arneson, R. (2021, April). Coyotes: To shoot or not to shoot?. The Western Producer.

2 Bettison, K. (2023, June 28). Meet Ohio's predatory coyote population. Animals Around the Globe.

3 Project Coyote, projectcoyote.org

4 Why killing coyotes doesn't work. The Humane Society of the United States. (n.d.-b). <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/why-killing-coyotes-doesnt-work>

5 Coyote Management Plan. (Mar. 1, 2018). North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission: 8

6 A. Treves et al., “Forecasting Environmental Hazards and the Application of Risk Maps to Predator Attacks on Livestock,” *BioScience* 61, no. 6 (2011); P.J. Baker et al., “Terrestrial Carnivores and Human Food Production: Impact and Management,” *Mammal Review* 38, (2008); A. Treves and K. U. Karanth, “Human-Carnivore Conflict and Perspectives on Carnivore Management Worldwide”

How to Avoid Conflict with Coyotes

- Do not feed coyotes (or any wildlife.) Limit food sources, including garbage.
- Do not let pets run loose.
- Remove brush and tall grass from around homes to reduce protective cover for coyotes.

Do you have questions, want to schedule an outing or workshop for your group or keep up with what's happening here? Email thequarryfarm@gmail.com, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and visit www.thequarryfarm.org or call 567-376-0705.

Donations to The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a 501(c)(3) public charity, are tax-deductible.

Winter 2024 Programs & Events

Dress for the weather, including good walking shoes, and meet in Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora. There is no fee to participate unless noted otherwise. Tax-deductible donations are welcome.

Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday, February 17, 9 a.m.

Birds are everywhere, all the time, doing fascinating things. Dress for the weather and bring your binoculars as we document the many species of birds that shelter here in winter. All recorded species will be submitted to the international Great Backyard Bird Count.

Follow the Tracks

Saturday, March 2, 10 a.m.

We leave signs of our presence everywhere we go. From footprints to the houses that we live in, humans leave evidence of everything we do. Animals do, too. Bundle up and walk the trails in search of tracks, snow angels made by hunting raptors, turtles breaking through the ice, tunnels, and so many more clues that can tell us who walked or flew ahead of us.

Worm Moon Hike

Monday, March 25, 7:30 p.m.

March's full moon is commonly called the Full Worm Moon. This is because of the earthworms that wriggle out of the ground as the earth begins to thaw in March. We hope to see this early spring moon and hear some owls. If the moon is behind the clouds, we will still enjoy a lantern hike through the woods.

Total Eclipse on the Prairie

Monday, April 8, 2:30 p.m.

A total solar eclipse is a rare and spectacular phenomenon that occurs when the Moon blocks the Sun's light completely. This eclipse will be the first total solar eclipse to be visible in the U.S. since August 21, 2017. We will have a front row seat for what is dubbed the Great North American Eclipse by media. So that we won't impact sensitive plant populations in the prairie viewing area, including emerging spring wildflowers, we are limiting the amount of foot traffic for this event. Registration is limited to 35 people. Please call 567-376-0705 on or before Thursday, April 4 to register with name and number of individuals in your group.



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Mission Statement

It is our goal and mission to provide the opportunity for people of all ages to increase their understanding of the natural environment of Northwest Ohio and to interact with their fellow inhabitants in a sustainable manner.



Golden-crowned Kinglets are boldly marked with a black eyebrow stripe and yellow crest. (Photo by Deb Weston)

The Quarry Farm Newsletter is a quarterly publication for supporters of The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a nonprofit organization in Pandora, Ohio.

On the cover: Deb Weston captured a brilliant male flicker against a clear blue sky over the prairie.

All photographs printed in this newsletter were taken on The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm.

www.thequarryfarm.org



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October 7 was a crisp fall day for the 5K.

Under One Big Sky

The 8th Annual Quarry Farm 5K crossed the starting line on a truly chilly, windy October 7. Runners and walkers headed into strong westerly gusts, then unzipped their jackets and sweatshirts at the halfway point to float with the wind to the finish. Phil Buell came in first for men, with his son Adam on his heels. Susie Ricker was the first woman 5Ker. Casey Walker was the first walker. An anonymous mini Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle won the children's division. Deb Weston and her camera captured the morning before much-needed rain settled in for the afternoon.



Emmanuel Lutheran Church's Fall Festivities Day was held on October 21 and we were there alongside Johnny Appleseed Park District. Estella the Virginia Opossum introduced families to her marvelous marsupial self and discovered that plain popcorn is a favorite treat.



Estella takes a break from munching popcorn at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Bluffton.

October 26 was Camping Day at Glandorf Elementary School. The lobby was transformed into the entrance to a tent campsite. Inside the "tent" were the classrooms, including the technology lab where Estella sniffed her long nose and twitched her shell-like ears to meet Grades kindergarten through fifth. Outside the building at the edge of Glandorf Park, middle school and junior high students made hiking sticks of harvested bush honeysuckle trunks.

The new moon was just visible through the clouds for the New Moon Hike* on December 12. Two Great Horned Owls had been calling all week but were quiet as the group walked. We made a loop around the quarry wetland, turned off flashlights to look at emerging stars in Nature's Classroom, and fortified with sugar cookies at the end of the journey.

**All visitors to The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm are required to call or email prior to being onsite.*

Resident Spotlight:

Lavender

Lavender was one of several victims of a chain farm's store's new retail chick display system. Rather than an open-air enclosure system, this new system took up less retail floor space by stacking the live products in an enclosed space. The stack was a high-rise; a chick skyscraper with no open windows to vent the ammonia produced by heated chick feces. We saw one little chick beating its beak on the upper layer's window. All the other chicks on that level were dead. The chicks on lower levels were dead or slowly dying. We were given permission to help clear the dead and purchase the living for \$1. The farm store reverted to the one air system at all of their locations, at least in Northwest Ohio.



Three of the chicks that came to the farm animal sanctuary survived. Sidney, a Silkie Rooster, and Speckles, a calico Bantam hen, are tight buddies. Lavender, so-named for her muted violet-and-pearl plumage, keeps her own counsel. She is what is referred to as a "fancy", with swirls of feathers booting her little feet. She flits in and out of the standard flock of hens and roosters, dodging under their feet for breakfast. This system works well for her in summer and fall. In wet spring and soupy winter mud and slush, her feathered boots cake and weight her down. Breeders are not known for their practicality.

Last year, her fancy footwear became so clogged that we had to soak them in warm water, trim her foot feathers and keep her indoors to allow her to eat and sleep in dry warmth. Once she recovered, we reintroduced her to the flock and she wanted nothing to do with humans beyond feeding time. Last week, Steve saw her hiding from one of the younger roosters. Lavender hopped up to Steve and chattered. She allowed herself to be picked up. Steve saw that her foot feathers were boggy. He took her inside, soaked her feet, trimmed and dried her feathers and set her outside. She hopped away to rejoin the flock and is not currently seeking human interaction other than at mealtime.

That's a Long-eared Big Bird

What with the weather see-sawing up and down the thermometer and little snow on the ground, we have only stocked bird feeders during the chillier days. While water has been scarce in Cranberry Run and the quarry, there has been a lot of wild seed and growing grass this warm fall and early winter. Birds usually take a day or two to finish a full feeder.

It seemed that the birds were ravenous at Christmas, depleting a full feeder in a couple of hours at most. After a third daily refill, we watched to see who was showing up to empty the pot. Turns out the birds were doing without while Lucy the Donkey's prehensile lips were tipping the whole thing to empty grains right into her open mouth.



Thank you...

...to David Seitz for honeysuckle and vine removal and hydrological engineering

...to Megan, Tim and Walter Cusick for donating pumpkins for the farm animal sanctuary

...to Dave Hilty for donating pumpkins for the farm animal sanctuary

...to Deb Weston for monitoring bird migration in the nature preserve



Evening hiking in the upland forest

Monetary Donations:

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