Coyotes attacks increase in frequency

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Most of us eventually grow out of our childhood fear of dangers living in the woods, but for some Guelph residents those fears have been re-awoken. A number of coyote attacks on pets in Guelph have been reported over the last few weeks. A report issued by the Guelph Humane Society and the City of Guelph suggests to always keep an eye on small children while they’re outside, and keep dogs and cats inside during the night.

One of those attacks occurred on Feb. 24, and resulted in the death of a beloved family dog. Watching from the backyard window of their home in the south end of Guelph, the dog owner’s 11-year-old daughter witnessed two coyotes attack and kill their pet.

Coyotes haven’t been native to Southern Ontario for very long. They migrated from western North America just over a hundred years ago. Since then they’ve been thriving, and have expanded their territory to just about all of North America.

“Coyotes play an important role in controlling populations of rabbits, rats and mice, and they can be a threat to other animals,” said Deb Gray, operations manager for the Guelph Humane Society.

While normally nocturnal, they are known to be active in the daytime during their mating season, from around January to mid-March.

“Coyotes are highly adaptive, and they’re learning to live closer to people so we are starting to see them more often,” said Gray, who’s worked in animal care for 18 years. “People can discourage coyotes from entering their properties by removing yard waste and securing compost and other garbage”

Coyotes, or *Canis latrans* are closely related to wolves and dogs which, along with the dingoas and the jackals, make up all the living species of the genus Canis. Aside from killing or injuring pets, they are also are sexually attracted to some dog species. Male coyotes and female dogs can give birth to hybrids called Coydogs. The inverse- Dogotes is also possible but occurs less often.

Gray says that the coyotes are learning to adapt to living in close proximity to humans, and like any wild animal will do what they have to do to survive. Outdoor cats are especially vulnerable to coyotes as they don’t tend to have a fear of dogs, which for them a coyote would resemble. Outdoor cats don’t have the same instincts as a feral cat and would be easier prey for a coyote.