

Medford Transcript – Letter to the Editor

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Title: **More Education Needed with Coyotes**

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In response to recent article: "[Coyote population on the rise in Medford, across Massachusetts](#)"

After review of your [article on Medford Coyotes](#), on the Wicked Local news outlet, I felt compelled to respond to inaccuracies and a few seemingly flippant statements made by contributors, minimizing people's loss of pets to coyotes... This may have not been the intent, but nonetheless, unfortunately came across that way. It is these types of statements that frustrate people who have been impacted directly or indirectly by coyotes, suggesting it is simply their lack of vigilance that caused the conflict and nothing more. People like 85 year old [Marjory Christiani of Quincy, MA who lost her beloved 13-year old Chihuahua](#) right before her eyes on her front porch steps. Out of respect for people like Marjory and others, making statements like **"Although coyotes would gladly feed on small dogs, cats or other household pets, attacks can easily be prevented by keeping pets inside unless closely supervised"** falls woefully short of an acceptable solution. It comes across as disrespectful and insensitive to the emotional stress and/or real losses people have incurred. There were also a few additional inaccurate statements made concerning the diet of coyotes and the idea that they can help to reduce Lyme disease... Coyotes definitely do include deer in their diet, [it is primarily fawns in June and July](#), but is not a significant source of food throughout the year. However, looking at 20 years worth of data, a number of [studies are showing that rodents may play a greater role than previously thought](#) in the Lyme disease epidemic, and that higher deer populations do not always correlate with increases in Lyme disease cases. This puts into question the idea that coyotes can significantly reduce Lyme disease. In fact, the study also discusses how the displacement of fox by the more aggressive and [larger coyote in New England could actually be a major factor for the increase in Lyme disease cases](#). Fox are not the "opportunistic" feeders that coyotes are and feed significantly throughout the year on small mammals. Fox will not hover or scavenge around a human induced food source like coyotes will – short of the appealing chicken coop. It is important to highlight that those organizations and individuals whose agendas have very narrow sideboards, will tend to minimize or dismiss factual information that is contrary to meeting their goals and objectives. *This is why it is critical that the management of wildlife be put in the hands of agencies that have a constitutional wildlife mission to uphold*, opposed to special interest animal groups trying to sway public opinion to meet their philosophical and funding needs. The notion that coyotes should eat, sleep, reproduce and live out their lives undisturbed in our urbanized close quarters - under our porches and in our backyards as the article implies, is a dangerous precedent to set. In fact, it is this level of unreasonable tolerance that *has, can, and will* only lead to one very upsetting conclusion. I can say with confidence that [John McPhearson of Groveland](#), [Robin Gallagher's little niece](#) (5 years old at the time) from Weymouth, or [Phillip Giglio of Woburn](#) to name a few, would all vehemently back up that concern... all of who were attacked and bitten by coyotes recently. For them, this is not some theoretical statistical scenario that most likely won't happen to them - it already has. Not only is this idea upsetting; it's a radical, fringe theory being promoted to the mainstream public and a recipe for the unthinkable to occur. It puts people, their pets and domestic animals in a position that perpetually exposes them to undue risk. While both self-prescribed "experts" and so-called

"animal advocate" organizations stand alongside of some legitimate ones claiming these attacks on people are rare and atypical - conflicts with coyotes continue and are increasing, in every corner of our state. The simple truth of the matter is that coyotes should not be allowed to establish home ranges in certain areas where the potential for serious conflicts with people are a high probability. This is where sane, rational thinking quickly parts ways with those who choose to believe in the unbelievable. However, with that said, it is still not feasible, desirable or even possible to irradiate coyotes from the entire landscape either. Coyotes are now firmly established here and play an important role in the natural world around us. Our responsibility as stewards of the land is to ensure that these animals are respected as a valuable resource, and *not* merely viewed as a pest to be exterminated or feared when they cross certain behavioral lines. Unfortunately for us, there is no single, convenient approach or philosophy that will successfully address the coyotes' peaceful coexistence with people all the time, or in every place on our highly developed landscape. This inconvenient truth is much to the chagrin of "no-kill" advocates, as they continue to promote a Disney style interpretation of coexistence as the only viable alternative. To be successful in addressing coyote coexistence across Massachusetts, it will take a combined approach that includes; education, awareness, proper management, and at times - control methods (*both lethal and non-lethal*) using the most effective and efficient tools available. Merely speaking half-truths about the benefits that coyotes provide to quell the fears of an increasingly concerned public only exasperates the problem. It's time to start being honest about the risks, and only then can we make progress on finding reasonable, long term solutions to respond to them. So, are coyotes getting a "*bad rap*" as the article proclaims?... well maybe, sometimes - but not always. We must continually remind ourselves that coyotes are, and always will be wild animals and we need to balance our response accordingly. This is not the Magic Kingdom... its real life.