

# How can we **co-exist** with coyotes and other urban wildlife?

Saskatoon's plentiful green spaces attract coyotes, moose, porcupines, rabbits, raccoons and other wildlife. Here's what to do if you have a wildlife encounter.

BY PAUL SINKEWICZ

Saskatoon is a city where pavement meets the edge of nature in a matter of steps.

That means residents and their pets are likely to eventually encounter wildlife at some point in their travels. Education is the key to taking the drama out of those meetings, says Bonnie Dell, executive director of the Wildlife Rescue Society of Saskatchewan (WRSOS).

"We have some beautiful off-leash areas here in Saskatoon that other cities don't have. But they're still in the wild. And all along the riverbank you're going to have encounters," says Dell.

Encounters earlier this year included raccoons with canine distemper in the Sutherland Beach area and numerous coyote sightings. WRSOS picked up five raccoons within a three-week period, and they all tested positive for distemper and were humanely euthanized. She said the issue could flare up again.

"People were letting their dogs go after them, and it's so dangerous. It's dangerous for the raccoon and it's very dangerous for the dog. We had to get Public Health involved because so many dogs had actual physical contact with a sick raccoon."

Other animals pet owners may encounter include rabbits, badgers, bats, foxes, muskrats and gophers.

WRSOS is a registered, non-profit organization with a network of dedicated



The City of Saskatoon offers helpful advice to residents who have a close encounter with a coyote: Don't turn your back or run. Make noise and wave your arms to make yourself appear bigger. Keep pets under control and on a leash in known coyote areas. Don't block the coyote's escape route. (CITY OF SASKATOON)

volunteers who provide helpline, rescue and transport services. The group is committed to the idea that wildlife and humans can live together successfully and is dedicated to minimizing wildlife suffering due to human interaction. The organization responds to calls from the public to its helpline 365 days a year.

"We have volunteers throughout the province," says Dell. "If you have a question about wildlife, or you have an issue, you can call, and conflict resolution is a big part of what we do. We are all about co-existing and being humane in getting wildlife away from where you are. And if you have something that needs

rescuing, we can arrange that, as well.

"I think the number one thing you can do is educate yourself in how to respond. That's where we play a big role."

Dell has some wise advice for dog walkers.

"Keep your dog on the leash, unless you're in an off-leash area. And if you are an off-leash area and you encounter wildlife, immediately leash that dog before anyone is harmed — either your dog or the wildlife."

She also advises pet owners to keep cats indoors because they harm a lot of wildlife.

Dell says 99 per cent of conflicts between dogs and wildlife happen with off-leash dogs.



**All pets must be on a leash unless in a designated off-leash area.**

“It’s not just raccoons with distemper. You can run into coyotes, skunks, porcupines.”

Recently an alarming wildlife encounter happened to an acquaintance in Lakeview Park after sunset, while she was out walking her dog on a leash.

Two coyotes started following her and she didn’t know what would happen. But not to worry, says Dell.

“That’s a normal occurrence, especially at this time of year. Any predator practices what’s called escorting. When you are in their territory, and they want you out, they will follow you quite closely until you are far enough away that they feel comfortable.” She says foxes and wolves do the same thing.

In the city, it’s important to know that coyotes mate for life, and as spring approaches,

pairs get ready to den. So, they will protect their home sites, and there can be multiple dens for one pair, because they move around.

Dell says her friend was terrified during the encounter, but the coyotes didn’t become aggressive. She now understands the behaviour and will just avoid the area for a while.

In the meantime, the City of Saskatoon has put up some signs warning other walkers. There are similar signs in 14 other areas of the city where coyote sightings have occurred.

The City’s Animal Services team provides advice on the Wildlife Management section of their web page ([saskatoon.ca/wildlifemanagement](http://saskatoon.ca/wildlifemanagement)), with contact numbers and links to Saskatchewan Environment and Wildlife Rescue Society of Saskatchewan.

If an animal approaches, pick up your child

or small animal, and slowly back up, she said. Don’t run, just make yourself look big and make a lot of noise, and they’ll back off.

“They are inherently scared of people. They’re just trying to tell you that they are there, and if you could just give that area some space,” says Dell.

If you see a moose, phone Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment Conservation officers and they will act appropriately. “We are getting many more moose in the city. At one point last year conservation officers had removed 10 moose from the city,” says Dell.

“Saskatoon has left lots of green spaces and natural wildlife corridors. The city loves having wildlife here, and everyone should. We’re very lucky to have them here. Just be aware that you are sharing the land with these animals.”

# SPCA Auxiliary *supports* animals for over 50 years

BY JENNIFER JACOBY-SMITH

You probably don’t know much about the Saskatoon SPCA Auxiliary. And they’re fine with that, according to Leslie Avant, Auxiliary secretary.

In 1973, the Saskatoon SPCA Auxiliary formed as a fundraising arm of the Saskatoon SPCA. Seeing the need for ongoing funding, a group of passionate and dedicated individuals formed the Saskatoon SPCA Auxiliary. At the time, the SPCA occupied a tiny shelter located in Sutherland.

“We started out selling things like tea cozies to raise funds,” says Avant. “We had no real direction. We were just helping to raise money for the shelter.”

Fifty-one years later, the Auxiliary has 20 members who volunteer in various capacities to organize fundraisers throughout the year. They continue to support the Saskatoon SPCA through various events and fundraising efforts each year.

About 25 years ago, the group started their Second Chance fund. This fund is mainly used to pay for much needed surgeries for otherwise adoptable animals. The fund can help with cases involving extensive dental work, surgery on a broken limb, ear cleaning or eye procedures. The Second Chance fund offers

life-changing health interventions which then allows them to find their forever home.

A sweet example of the Second Chance fund in action is the shelter’s mascot, Flipper. A bright-eyed grey kitten named Flipper was abandoned because of a deformed hind leg. The Second Chance fund covered the cost of his surgery to amputate the leg.

During his rehabilitation the SPCA staff fell in love with the determined three-legged cat and Flipper became the official mascot of the Saskatoon SPCA.

“Over the years we’ve contributed to things like when they’re getting low on cat litter, toys or puppy food,” explains Avant. With the new facility on Hanselman Avenue, the Auxiliary is helping out in some key ways, namely the construction of new dog kennels that will make it safer and easier for the animals to access.

The Auxiliary works on three major fundraising events each year: two open houses (one in May and one in December) and a garage sale in July. The open houses always feature a raffle with tickets sold at various Co-op stores around the city. The funds they raise offer life-changing opportunities for furry little friends.

In addition to the events, the Auxiliary also sells catnip mice through various partners, including many veterinary clinics in the city. “Last year, we sold 900,” reports Avant.



Flipper was abandoned as a kitten due to a deformed back leg. He’s now the charming mascot for the Saskatoon SPCA, thanks to the Second Chance fund from the SPCA Auxiliary. (SUPPLIED)

Last year, the group started a new initiative: a calendar featuring photos of animals from the shelter who have been helped by the Second Chance fund. The next edition should be ready in September of 2024.

“We do work behind the scenes,” says Avant. “There’s not a lot talked about the SPCA Auxiliary and that’s OK with us. We’re there to help the shelter. The more support we can generate, the better.”

If you want to know more about upcoming events or how to get involved with the Auxiliary, visit their Facebook group or call Avant at (306) 491-9199.