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**Civic News Moraga**

**Beware of Coyotes**

By Sophie Braccini

Ever get the feeling someone's following you? Maura Richards and Ellen Gunderson did while running on the hill trail off Rancho Laguna Park in Moraga the morning of Jan. 31— a pack of 10 coyotes started hunting them, or their dogs. Coyotes rarely attack humans, but given an opportunity they will go after pets.

"We were running the Canyon Loop Trail with our two dogs when we started hearing the yelps and barks of coyotes on the hunt," recalled Richards. "It sounded like they were following us. When we reached the crossing where the dilapidated buildings stand, we saw them. A pack of 10, coming at us." Richards said that the band came within 30 feet of them. Their dogs immediately took off. Richards armed herself with a large stick and the two women ran back to the park. "Once we passed the cow fence they stopped," she said, adding that she had the scare of her life even though she thinks it is more likely that the wild animals were after the dogs than the people.

Coyotes are opportunistic, versatile carnivores with a dietary adaptability that has made them very successful, growing in number since human encroachment began. A 2004 study by Robert M. Timm, et al, for San Diego County showed an increase in the number of coyote attacks in California, especially in the southern suburban-wildlife interface. "Our observations indicate that in the absence of harassment by residents, coyotes can lose their fear of people and come to associate humans with this safe, resource-rich



Illustration Jaya Griggs

environment," they wrote. "In such situations, some coyotes have begun to act aggressively toward humans, chasing joggers and bicyclists, confronting people walking their dogs, and stalking small children." In northern California only one attack on a human was recorded.

UC Davis Integrated Pest Management Online concurs that the problem worsens when coyotes lose their fear of humans and that they need to be removed when that happens. Matt Slattengren at the Contra Costa Agriculture Department indicated that if an incident were reported to them, they would contact the state trapper who is in charge of removing coyotes.

The Department of Fish and Game recommends that if a coyote approaches you should try to frighten it away by shouting in a

deep voice, waving your arms, throwing things at it, and looking it directly in the eyes; then retreat from the situation by walking slowly backward so as not to turn your back on the coyote. The agency also recommends stashing food and trash that attract coyotes and never leaving pets and small children unattended outside.

Moraga Police Chief Robert Priebe indicated that the best number to call in a dangerous situation is either 911 or the county police dispatch line, (925) 284-5010; the call will be directed to the correct agency.

Nicole Kozicki, the Fish and Game warden for Moraga, said she had not heard about the incident but she would check to if there has been a pattern of attacks in Moraga, at which point the state trapper would be activated.

**From Front Page**

**Where's the Love, Lamorinda?**

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What more meaning than that can it possibly have? And when Shawn, an Orinda mom on her way to do food

shopping, brushed me off with, "We're going to the Cal-UCLA basketball game that night," it was time to change tactics.

Where better than the greeting card display at a drug store to find a real Valentine's fan, right? Except Tenaya's first word in response to my question blew up that theory. "Honestly?" she asked. "It's a Hallmark holiday. It's superficial. I don't like it when they're telling you that you have to celebrate. I'm just looking [at valentines] for my kids."

I walked away in despair from the 20-something Lafayette mom.

The candy store! Surely there'd be a romantic, ordering a special treat for Valentine's Day, wouldn't there? Laura, 40s, an Orinda IT manager, set that straight. "I avoid it because of the hype," she said. "You can show affection in other ways. I'm jaded. And my brother

even owns a flower shop!"

Just as I was about to beg off of this depressing story, Rebecca appeared, as she shopped along Mt. Diablo Boulevard. "Oh, I love Valentine's Day," she said. Flashing the biggest smile and brightest eyes of the day, the 50-ish vice president of a garden club continued: "I go out in my backyard and cut wreaths from my olive trees. I bring out all of the Valentine's cards that I've received since I was a little girl, and place them around the house. My friends and I will have a tea that day, and we'll talk about famous lover couples. And then my husband and I are going to dinner and then spend the night at the Lafayette Park Hotel."

Finally! There's the love, Lamorinda. Rebecca, you are an inspiration to us all.

Happy Valentines' Day everybody!

**Correction, issue date Jan. 30, 2013,**

**Team Toaster Almost Ready to Roll:**

The contact information we included in this article was incorrect.

To reach Team Toaster please email David Gerson, david@loavesfishescc.org. For more information about Loaves and Fishes, go to www.loavesfishescc.org.

