

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday. We're set for another year of Green! I look forward to our next meeting January 10<sup>th</sup>, 7:00pm, at the Dublin Service Center (6555 Shier-Rings Road).

My morning started off in a wonderful way last Friday. Despite the cold, the sun was shining and the blue sky was just dotted, instead of consumed by clouds. I was greeted by a coyote at the entrance to our fleet building. It was around 7:30am and the beautiful dog was just meandering through a grassy area, ears perked, looking for food. I'm certain it was hungry. The sight of my vehicle scared it. The coyote trotted over a small embankment, but slowly returned to the area to hunt. Nose down, ears perked, it continued. I watched till it was out of sight. I will forever be in awe of animals in winter.

It is not certain how long coyotes have been in Ohio. Some scientists believe they are indigenous, while others believe they came here after the extirpation of wolves. Regardless, they are here to stay. They've become my favorite Ohio animal, probably because of the way they've been unnecessarily villainized.

Many people fear coyotes. I do not think we need to fear any wild Ohio animal, but we should have respect for them and learn to properly share space. Most people are surprised to find that 42 percent of coyote's diet consists of small rodents, particularly meadow voles. Coyotes are pack animals, but most do not hunt in packs in our area.

Coyotes seem large this time of year and I receive a lot of 'wolf' sightings. They are typically thinner, but put on about an extra inch of fur to fend off cold. Their tracks are a beautiful egg shape with only the middle two claws showing. I find them often along tree lines. If you think you see a coyote in the distance, note the position of it's tail. Coyotes always point their tails towards the ground, never up.

Coyotes den only during breeding season and bed down in any sheltered place other times of the year. Mid Ohio Auto Group even had one curled up outside their glass entry way. As soon as it woke and saw all of the people staring, it ran away.

We can deter coyotes and all other wild animals from our yards by keeping pet food inside, keeping tight lids on garbage cans and feeding birds in the early morning only. Bird feeding draws in many animals. I call them animal drive-throughs. Even left over fruit from trees and vegetable gardens can bring in animals looking for an easy dinner. Cleaning up discarded fruit and vegetables from your property will also deter animals.

Of course if you want to see wildlife, keep a safe distance and use binoculars.  
Happy wildlife viewing!