

## **Living with Wildlife Neighbors: Humane Ways to Address Coyotes**

by Supervisor Linda Parks, State Senator Henry Stern, Thousand Oaks Mayor Claudia Bill-de la Peña, Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority Chair George Lange, November 2021

We are blessed to live surrounded by nature and open space. Indeed, the proximity to natural open lands and trails is one of the great joys of living in our area. These lands add to our quality of life and the desirability of homes.

But like homeownership generally, living next to nature has both its joys and its responsibilities. Along with stewardship of our properties for fire protection and water conservation, we must also be mindful and protective of the wildlife that are our natural neighbors.

Throughout California, communities that have developed near wildlands have learned to live with their wildlife neighbors, from coyotes, foxes and bobcats, to bears and mountain lions. Thankfully, long gone are the days when the indiscriminate slaughter of large wildlife was considered an acceptable practice.

It has come to our attention that a Homeowner's Association in Thousand Oaks has contracted for the indiscriminate trapping and killing of coyotes. While coyotes can pose risks to pets, attacks on humans are extremely rare.

It is inordinately cruel, inhumane, and unjustified to maim and kill coyotes that pose minimal risks to humans. There are many places to live where people can avoid wildlife. If we choose to live where wildlife roam, especially for this Homeowner's Association that backs up to open space, we must accept the responsibility for our choice, and for minimizing risks and conflicts.

At a time when we are building a very special wildlife crossing bridge to further the ability of wildlife to remain in our natural open space areas, it is antithetical for homeowner associations to be killing off our area's coyotes before they can use it. A little additional care and practice will minimize the issue that these residents are so concerned about.

There are many guides for avoiding conflicts with coyotes for those who live near open space. Measures include not leaving pet or human food outside, keeping cats indoors, promptly harvesting fruit, keeping dogs on leashes. For people concerned about coyotes, carrying pepper spray, an air horn, or walking stick can allay those fears.

We are stewards of our mountains and wildlands and have a stake in the health of our environment, including the wildlife. Coyotes are integral to the ecosystem and are beneficial predators that keep rodent populations in check. Destroying coyotes for fear of them attacking pets does more harm than good and the painful traps that snare them are inhumane. That is why we join together to strongly condemn the trapping of coyotes and call upon the Homeowner Association to cease this practice immediately. We can all learn to coexist with coyotes as we have in the past and countless California communities do every day.