

Student Test Form



Read Selection 1, an article about wild animals that are appearing in neighborhoods.

SELECTION 1

The Coyote Next Door These wild creatures are moving in

Terry Krautwurst

Imagine getting on a train and discovering that the window seat you wanted was already taken—by a coyote. That’s exactly what happened to passengers in Portland, Oregon. A wildlife official responded to the scene and gently lassooed the four-legged passenger, letting it loose in a nearby field. Coyotes pop up in New York City’s Central Park, dig dens in Detroit, Michigan, and trot across city streets from Atlanta, Georgia, to Los Angeles, California. These clever wild animals have learned to live among us, often alarming homeowners who spot them in backyards. As cities sprawl into their habitat, coyotes have adapted well. To a coyote, an open garbage can means an easy meal, and small pets left in yards are often considered prey. Can we learn to live with coyotes as neighbors?

Street Smarts

Coyotes used to live only in wide-open spaces of western prairies and deserts. They avoided forests, where wolves, their enemies, roamed. But as forests were cleared to make room for farms and communities, coyotes started spreading east and west into the newly open territories.

Most coyotes are afraid of people, so those living in cities and suburbs have learned how to avoid being seen. Street smart coyotes hunt for food between dusk and dawn, when few people

are around. They watch for traffic before crossing streets. They travel swiftly among the trees and weeds along roads. During the day, the animals rest in out-of-the-way spots. “They’re trying to avoid people as best as they can,” says Stanley Gehrt, a scientist studying coyotes around Chicago, Illinois.

The Good Life

City life suits coyotes in several ways. There are no mountain lions, wolves, or hunters and trappers—enemies coyotes face outside city limits. City coyotes eat well, too. Parks, yards, and green spaces in cities and suburbs provide habitat for a feast of favorite coyote foods, including mice, rats, rabbits, and squirrels. Coyotes also eat lots of fruits, berries, and grasshoppers.

With plenty of natural food and no predators, coyotes in urban areas are healthier, live longer, and raise larger families than their country cousins. City life is good for coyotes—as long as they follow their instinct to stay away from people.

Please Don’t Feed Me!

Unfortunately, some city coyotes lose their fear of humans. They find tasty garbage or pet food outside homes. They discover that backyard feeders are good places to hunt for birds. They notice that people ignore them instead of chasing them away. Some

humans even feed coyotes on purpose, thinking it's an act of kindness. Actually, it's a serious mistake.

Coyotes that become comfortable around people and learn to associate buildings and yards with food are the ones that get into trouble. They roam in broad daylight, venturing too close for comfort. Some attack pets in yards or snatch them off leashes. Rarely a coyote may even chase or bite a human. An animal that behaves in these ways must be removed by wildlife officials.

We're Responsible

"It's people that change coyotes' behavior," says Gehrt. But we're also the ones who can help them be good neighbors. "Coyotes learn from us," Gehrt advises. "That means that we can teach them by not providing food for them, and by making sure they know there are certain areas they're not allowed."

Can coyotes and people live more safely together in cities and suburbs? The answer, it turns out, is up to us.

Read Selection 2, an article about crickets and what they do for our world. Then answer the questions that follow.

SELECTION 2

How Crickets Help Us Check the Pulse of America’s Wild Places

Amy E. Nevala

The screeching started every evening at dusk. As the darkness grew, so did the voices—**sometimes shrill, sometimes sweet** and always long. Some of my companions called it a cricket commotion. I called it a chorus.

I slept 48 nights in a tent last summer during a bicycle trip from Seattle to Washington, D.C. Each night the crickets and katydids—large members of the grasshopper family—sang me to sleep. The song in every state was a little different, from the powerful buzz of Wisconsin’s robust conehead katydids, to the ringing songs of Pennsylvania’s tinkling ground crickets, to the ethereal¹ calls of Maryland’s black-horned tree crickets.

Like all living creatures, certain crickets prefer living in particular habitats—meadows, woods, prairies or wetlands. To monitor changes in these habitats, biologists such as Sam Droege at the federal Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland count and track the insect sounds.

“Counting these animals helps to monitor Earth’s vital signs,” Droege says. “We are changing things so fast we have to keep checking the pulse.” As humans multiply and suburbs creep deeper into natural areas, scientists are monitoring the impacts of development on wildlife, water and other natural resources. It’s like the canary in the mine shaft test, Droege says. “If we hear the crickets, then we don’t, something may be amiss with the health of the environment.” Droege spent the last four summers counting crickets and katydids in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia parks and suburbs to compare variations in their populations. While his research is preliminary,² the numbers may provide a snapshot of the region’s environmental health. Droege has noticed that the farther he moves from woods and undisturbed areas into urban zones, the more the sounds of the insects decline—sometimes as much as 50 percent. This may mean less diversity and numbers not only among crickets and katydids, but also other wildlife, he says.

¹ ethereal: very delicate or light; as if from another world

² preliminary: coming before, so as to prepare for something else

“How Crickets Help Us Check the Pulse of America’s Wild Places” by Amy E. Nevala, from *National Wildlife*, August/September 2000. Copyright © 2000 by National Wildlife Federation. Published by National Wildlife Federation.

STUDENT NAME:	TEACHER NAME:	DATE:
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Reading Informational Texts
The Coyote Next Door/How Crickets Help

For each question, choose the correct answer. Then completely fill in the circle for the answer you chose.

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| <p>1. According to Selection 1, coyotes in cities mainly hunt at night to avoid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ predators. Ⓑ sunlight. Ⓒ humans. Ⓓ vehicles. <p>2. What do the ideas in the first paragraph of Selection 1 mostly suggest?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ Coyotes prefer to live in public parks. Ⓑ Coyotes are now found in unusual places. Ⓒ Coyotes can be very dangerous to humans. Ⓓ Coyotes should be removed from urban areas. | <p>3. Based on Selection 2, which statement best describes the author’s thoughts on wilderness areas?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ She prefers urban areas to wilderness areas. Ⓑ She finds it difficult to sleep in wilderness areas. Ⓒ She feels that insects should stay in wilderness areas. Ⓓ She likes the sounds that insects make in wilderness areas. <p>4. In Selection 2, how does paragraph 2 contribute to the main idea?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ⓐ It shows that insect sounds are mainly heard at night. Ⓑ It shows that there are a variety of insects that make sounds. Ⓒ It shows that each state has its own kind of insects that make interesting sounds. Ⓓ It shows that insect sounds are currently part of the environment across the country. |
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