

THE COYOTE WAY

-submitted by Cheryl Morris-Putman for MVFN

On **Thursday, October 20 at 7:30 pm.**, the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists will host the second presentation for the new season, reflecting the theme “**Wild Creature Close-Ups**”. This event will take place in the Social Hall of Almonte United Church, 106 Elgin St., Almonte, Ontario.

We will enter the mysterious world of the Coyote (*Canis latrans*) and our 'guide' will be **Mr. Tyler Wheeldon**, Ph.D. Candidate at Trent University. He has entitled his presentation “**Coyotes: A Southeastern Ontario Study**”.

How many of us have heard the loud, piercing howl of a lone coyote or the yip-howls of a group of coyotes in the wild or suburban landscapes that this fascinating species of mammal occupies? Have you wondered if that elusive shadow that you “thought you saw out of the corner of your eye” one night was perhaps a coyote exploring his urban territory? Have you been fortunate enough to see, from a distance, a pack of coyotes spread out single-file on a snow-laden field? If you have experienced any of these brief and elusive encounters, you have entered the world of the coyote.

The Coyote is one of the most versatile and vocal of wildlife species. It is noted for its ability to adapt to environments modified by humans. As human activity has altered the landscape, the coyote's range has expanded. The coyote has a varied diet consisting primarily of animal meat, including deer, rabbits, sheep, rodents, birds, reptiles, amphibians (except toads), fish, lizards, snakes, crustaceans, and insects. On occasion, coyotes will also consume fruits and vegetables.

Because of the coyote's adaptability, the “**conservation status**” of the species is listed as being of “least concern”. Humans aside, cougars and gray wolves are the coyote's only serious enemies. The species now occupies the majority of areas between Panama and the slopes of northern Alaska. It is both a gregarious and solitary animal, and is recognized as being the most vocal of all wild North American mammals, with a repertoire of 11 distinct vocalizations. The species name, *Canis latrans*, literally means “barking dog”.

In Native American folklore, the coyote is a prominent character, often being depicted as a “trickster” that alternatively assumes the form of an actual coyote or a man. The coyote was often portrayed as a picaresque hero, rebelling against social convention, using deception and humor as its weapons. Anglo-American culture depicted the coyote as a cowardly, stealthy, untrustworthy animal. And on a lighter note, who can forget the character, Wile E. Coyote, who starred alongside the famous Bugs Bunny and Roadrunner in Looney Tunes productions. Tyler Wheeldon will help us to understand the fascinating world and distinctive attributes of the coyote. He will describe the findings of a three-year coyote study conducted in Prince Edward County. His presentation will include a discussion of territory sizes, social organization, movements (including animations), activity patterns, genetics, morphology, survival and reproduction and will attempt to address the issue of why coyote populations persist despite

harvesting by humans. Mr. Wheeldon holds a Master of Science degree from Trent University and has extensively researched wolf-coyote hybridization. His current focus is on the space-use patterns and population dynamics of coyotes and their resilience despite human harvesting.

Please join us for this interesting and informative presentation. Refreshments and discussion will follow the talk. There is a non-member fee of \$5. There will be no charge for youth 18 years and under. For further information, please contact MVFN's Program Chair, Gretta Bradley at gbradley@icloud.com.