

Coyote Stories Interview 112

Interviewer: Okay. Please tell me a story about an experience you've had with coyotes in Vermont.

Interviewee: Okay. So when we built our house in Williston here in 1996 I had no experience with coyotes and didn't had never even seen one and right next to our house, where we were building our house, is Brownell Mountain and apparently that is a habitat, or has been a habitat for, um, coyotes in Chittenden County, And we had no idea! So we moved in in April of '97 and we started seeing coyotes and, um, hearing them howl at night and, um, being really kind of unnerved by it, so we called the wildlife department and they reassured us that, you know, coyotes don't necessarily interact with people and they live on the mountain. So, I remember when, um, Seamus was little, really little, and, um, we had our first two dogs and he was outside on our swingset and, um, a couple of rather big coyotes started coming up in bright daylight, coming up the back, um, hill behind our house.

Interviewer: Oh my gosh!

Interviewee: Our dogs, who were like the most mild-mannered labs, just, I just remember them barking and barking and barking and Seamus coming towards the house, and I was like oh my gosh I didn't realize they were sort-of active.

Interviewer: That must've been so scary!

Interviewee: It was scary! And so then I started paying more attention, you know, like in the mornings before I would I let the dogs out and especially the, uh, term between winter and spring they must be starving and I-and I understand like, from a habitat perspective, they're out in the field hunting for mice or small rabbits or whatever, but it's kind of, um, unnerving to- I think we moved into their habitat and we weren't really expecting it, um, so we've had a lot of encounters with them over the past 20 years. Um, we also had a pair of coyotes that were sleeping up against the side of our house. Um, and the male coyote was actually injured, um, and they were-I'm sure our house was warmer than probably where they were sleeping. I remember really being nervous about that because at this point both kids were little, both dogs were around, and Jeff having to go out and actually shot a gun into the ground to make such a loud noise so that they would sort-of understand that they couldn't be, um, in our space.

Interviewer: yeah, wow. That's-that's pretty scary! To have them so close to you.

Interviewee: yeah!

Interviewer: ok, so would you mind just explaining to me why that story was meaningful to you?

Interviewee: Because I guess, you know, on the one hand, you-you know you like to think that you appreciate nature and that you're, um, you know I always think of myself as somebody who does appreciate nature, does appreciate the fact that, you know, we live in a more rural part of Chittenden County or outside of Burlington. And yet, when it comes right down to it, like, you have to protect your family, and your dogs and so you're kinda like- how do I- how do I navigate this? How do I make sure that I keep my group safe and keep them, you know, they can appreciate, they can have access to the land and do their thing, but preferably not up against my house.

Interviewer: haha! Totally, yeah. Okay, so now let's talk about coyotes more generally. Can you rank your experience with coyotes in Vermont on a scale from 1-10, with 1 being negative and 10 being positive?

Interviewee: I'd say it's about a 5.

Interviewer: okay.

Interviewee: Because on the positive side, I don't mind listening to them at night. I've gotten really used to them, sort of, being in our midst. I have to say, I don't walk in our field, um, when Seamus was really little- he was like in a front pack, like tiny baby- and Jeff thought it would be really fun to plow a pathway for me to walk with him when I was home on maternity leave and I came upon a coyote in the field-

Interviewer: *gasp*

Interviewee: and I was like, yeah no I'm not doing this. I think, you know, I think it's like neutral and it goes either direction of neutral based on the proximity of the encounter, does that make sense?

Interviewer: yeah. Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. Like they're fine as long as they're not- like howling in the night is fine. Um, you know, sleeping up against my house during the day- not so good.

Interviewer: yeah. Okay. So we're almost done, I just have a few quick background questions for you now.

Interviewee: okay.

Interviewer: So think back to the coyote story that you shared, can you tell me where it took place?

Interviewee: Here, um, in our yard.

Interviewer: Alright.

Interviewee: Here, at our house, in Williston.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what year your coyote story took place in? I guess you shared a couple, but, maybe just the first one?

Interviewee: The first? Probably like 2001 maybe.

Interviewer: okay.

Interviewee: I think Seamus was like 4 or 5- it was before Maeve was born.

Interviewer: Okay. What kinds of things do you do outside for work or for recreation?

Interviewee: I walk, um, we-we do biking and hiking and, um, kayaking.

Interviewer: Okay. How long have you lived in Vermont?

Interviewee: Uh, 51 years.

Interviewer: Wow. Uh, what town do you live in?

Interviewee: Williston.

Interviewer: What year were you born in?

Interviewee: 1968

Interviewer: What is your gender?

Interviewee: Female.

Interviewer: What is your ethnicity?

Interviewee: White.

Interviewer: Alright! You're done! Thanks so much for your story and your time!

Interviewee: Your lab was great!