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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2023

Cape May Star and Wave

A3

Coyote sightings may be linked to missing cats in West Cape

By **CAROLINE DUPREE**
Special to the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough residents have seen an uptick in cat disappearances and coyote sightings, and pet owners fear the two may be connected.

Animal Control of South Jersey, which handles such services for the borough, has received several reports of coyote sightings in West Cape May.

Animal Control Officer Stephen Serwatka said there recently have been more reports of coyotes and their numbers seem to be increasing. However, he noted there were more calls about coyotes last year than this year.

There have been several coyote sightings on residential streets.

Borough resident Ryan Wells told the Star and Wave that he walks around the neighborhood at night and has seen about four coyotes around the houses on Broadway. He said he had never seen the coyotes up close before this year.

According to Serwatka, "coyotes are shy, and they don't make their presence known. People are getting used to seeing them." He noted "coyotes hunt anything that is small enough to subdue," including cats

and rabbits.

Serwatka said he has received calls from people believing a coyote had taken their cat but noted he had never personally known that to happen.

One person who has recently lost her cat is Cindy Franklin, owner of Cape Islands Garden Center on Broadway. Franklin said her cat has never been gone so long.

"In nine years, I think she's been gone one time, one night," Franklin said. Her cat has been missing for almost three weeks.

Franklin called the county animal shelter, which informed her that they rarely receive calls from West Cape May reporting missing cats. However, they told her that multiple cats had been missing since the beginning of July.

Franklin has also seen coyotes in the borough — although normally during

the winter — on Broadway and in the back fields. She does not usually see them in the summer.

Franklin said she is uncertain whether the coyotes are at fault for her cat's disappearance, although she considers the possibility now that coyotes have been spotted on residential streets.

However, Franklin also has 30 rabbits on her property and questions why the cat disappeared, but all the rabbits remain.

Similarly, Wells noticed how there was no apparent decrease in rabbits in the neighborhood.

Other residents have become increasingly concerned about the coyotes and the danger they may present. One resident, Susan Demaio, said she is "horrified by the number of cats that have gone missing with no trace." Demaio, too, has spotted coyotes.

She has seen three by Sixth Avenue and two by Seashore Road.

Demaio also noted how it is strange that some cats who have disappeared were around 10 years old or even older, noting older cats tend to stay around their backyards and not stray.

Like Franklin, Demaio said she is uncertain whether coyotes are the cause of the disappearances but is worried about how

the coyotes could be dangerous to residents of Cape May, West Cape May, and North Cape May.

"How do we deal with that potential danger before someone is hurt?" Demaio asked.

She said she feels "dreadfully sorry" for those who lost their pets and urges others to take precautions by keeping their pets indoors.

Similarly, Serwatka urges pet owners to keep their

cats and small mammals inside.

Cape May Police Chief Dekon Fashaw told the Star and Wave the department has not received many coyote complaints this year.

"We did last year, however. When we do, we have our Animal Control Officer, Steve Serwatka, notified and he will either attempt to locate, and if need be, call the state animal control to help out," Fashaw stated.

TIDES: Aug. 9-16, 2023

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
9	2:56	3:37	8:48	9:55
10	4:02	4:38	9:46	10:58
11	5:05	5:34	10:43	11:55
12	6:02	6:25	11:37	
13	6:52	7:10	12:46	12:26
14	7:36	7:50	1:30	1:11
15	8:17	8:28	2:09	1:52
16	8:55	9:04	2:46	2:32

MOON PHASES

New moon, Aug. 16 • first quarter, Aug. 24



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