

AGENDA DESCRIPTION:

Consideration and possible action to receive and file the third quarterly status report on the implementation of the City's Coyote Management Plan

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

- (1) Receive and file the third quarterly status report on the implementation of the City's Coyote Management Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT: None

Amount Budgeted:	N/A
Additional Appropriation:	N/A
Account Number(s):	N/A

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REVIEWED BY: Kit Fox, AICP, Interim Deputy Director of Community Development (15)

APPROVED BY: Ara Mhrianian, AICP, Interim City Manager *A*

ATTACHED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

- A. 2019 Coyote Activity Map and Data (Page A-1)
- B. Coyote Sighting Quarterly Report Chart (Page B-1)

To view the City's Coyote Management Plan, "Keep Me Wild" brochure, and Home & Yard Checklist for Wildlife on the City's website, please visit <http://www.rpvca.gov/1113/Coyote-Management-Plan>

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

The 2019 City Council Goals (Quality of Life) include Goal No. 30 requiring Staff to provide a quarterly status report with data on the implementation and effectiveness of the City's Coyote Management Plan. The first quarterly report (January-May 20) was provided to the City Council at its June 4 meeting, which can be viewed on the City's website at the following link:

http://rpv.granicus.com/player/clip/3433?view_id=5

The second quarterly report was presented to the City Council on September 3, 2019 and covered the period between May 21 - August 23, 2019, and can be viewed on the City's website. Tonight's third quarterly report is intended to describe and compare the

implementation of the City's Coyote Management Plan since the second quarterly status report and covers the period between August 24- November 24, 2019.

Coyote Management Plan

The Peninsula cities agree that education is a key component in coyote management. The City's Coyote Management Plan is consistent with those in the cities of Rolling Hills Estates and Palos Verdes Estates, and is also based on input received from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), which administers the Coyote Wildlife Watch Program. The goal of the Management Plan is to encourage and "support coexistence with urban coyotes using education, behavior modification and development of a tiered response to aggressive coyote behavior." The tiered response requires active participation on the part of the entire community including residents, homeowners' associations, volunteers and City personnel. The Management Plan is based on research and best known practices, and includes a full spectrum of management tools. Basic principles that guide the Management Plan include following:

- Don't leave pet food outside.
- Don't leave small pets or children outside unattended.
- If you compost, use enclosed bins and never compost meat or fish scraps.
- Install motion-sensitive lighting around the house.
- Make sure your fences are 6 feet high with no gaps at ground level – coyotes are good diggers.
- Put bird feeders away at night to avoid attracting rodents and other coyote prey.
- Remove fallen fruit from the ground.
- Remove sources of water.
- Talk to your neighbors to make sure they're following the same procedures.
- Trim ground-level shrubbery to reduce hiding places.

The Management Plan (and Staff, in its public outreach) recommends hazing as another deterrent method to move a coyote out of an area or discourage undesirable behavior or activity. Coyotes develop these behaviors because they have become too comfortable living in close proximity to people. Hazing, also known as "fear conditioning," is an action that facilitates changes in coyote behavior, and is effective when a community responds consistently to negative encounters with coyotes. The more often an individual animal is hazed, the more effective hazing is in changing that animal's behavior. To safely coexist, it's important to modify this behavior and attitude in resident-coyote populations. Habituated coyote behavior needs to be reshaped to deter coyotes from coming in contact with humans and pets.

Hazing should be conducted in a manner that coaxes and steers the coyote to return to its natural habitat (i.e., canyons and open space areas). Hazing an animal toward other houses and busy streets should be avoided. A variety of tools should be used in hazing as coyotes can easily become acclimated to individual items and sounds:

- Noisemakers: raised voice, whistles, air horns, bells, “shaker” cans, pots, pie pans.
- Projectiles: sticks, small rocks, cans, tennis balls, rubber balls.
- Deterrents: hoses, spray bottles with vinegar, pepper spray, bear repellent, walking sticks.

A common concern with hazing involves potential danger to the hazer. A coyote’s basic nature is very skittish and the nature of the species is what makes this technique successful. A normal, healthy coyote will not escalate a situation with an aggressive person. Hazing is NOT successful with every species of wild animal because different types of animals have different traits.

The Management Plan describes the following City-level tiered response to specific coyote actions or behaviors.

- Level 1 (coyotes are either heard or seen) - The City’s response to the sighting is to provide informational material to educate the resident on typical coyote behavior.
- Level 2 (coyote encounters a person or pet) – The City’s response to the encounter is to conduct yard audits to identify ways to deter coyote entry and to improve pet management.
- Level 3 (coyote enters yard or pet is injured or killed) – The City’s response to the incident is to gather information and report it to the appropriate agencies, conduct a yard audit, develop a hazing team for the neighborhood, and implement the Wildlife Watch program.
- Level 4 (coyote shows teeth, back fur is raised, lunges towards a person, bites or injures a person) – The City’s response to the characteristics of an aggressive coyote is to initiate a trapping assessment and to coordinate with the Los Angeles County Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures (as described further below). Biting is reported to CDFW.

Coyote-Related Community Services

The Los Angeles County Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures (Agricultural Commissioner) has a contract with the City for coyote-related community services. However, when residents have concerns about coyote, they are asked to call the Code Enforcement Division first. Code Enforcement Staff will assess the situation and determine if the problem is one that can be handled by the use of preventative measures, or if the situation needs to be escalated to the Agricultural Commissioner for further review. Many times, informing residents about what they can do to secure their yard to deter coyotes is all that is needed. However, in some instances, Staff may determine that a visit from the Agricultural Commissioner is warranted. In those cases, City Staff and an Agricultural Commissioner officer will conduct a yard audit to assess what can be done to deter coyote activity.

Yard Audits

Yard audits involve working closely with numerous residents in a neighborhood by coordinating informative and educational outreach to identify potential coyote attractants such as fallen fruit, overgrown brush, inadequate fencing, and coyote scat. As part of the yard audit, residents are provided with the City's Coyote Management Plan, "Keep Me Wild" brochure, and Home & Yard Checklist for Wildlife (see link under "Attached Supporting Documents"). In some cases, through yard audits the Agricultural Commissioner has identified signs of aggressive coyote behavior and has set up traps. Since the last quarterly update on September 3, 2019, the City's Code Enforcement Officers, sometimes in collaboration with the Agricultural Commissioner, have conducted 15 yard audits on the following streets and locations:

- Via Siena – Two properties
- Via Siena Loop Trail
- Via Frascati – Three properties
- Headland Drive – Four properties
- Crownview Drive – Two properties
- Roan Road – One property
- Palos Verdes Drive East – One property
- Via Campesina- One property

Coyote Trapping

The Agricultural Commissioner provides trapping services only when it has been determined by the City that an "aggressive" coyote exists. As it is well known that trapping and the resulting euthanization of a coyote is not as effective as other methods of hazing contact, the City determines, based on field observations and assessing the incident, if a case needs to be brought to the county's attention or additional education instruction is needed. If the county is contacted because the City feels that a coyote may be "aggressive" and cause concern for the public's safety, the county will still conduct its own assessment to determine if trapping should occur. To date, six traps have been set up for 2019 quarterly reports.

If residents are concerned about coyotes in their area, the City recommends following the guidelines in the Management Plan in order to help shape coyote behavior to avoid human contact. Residents may contact the City's Code Enforcement Division if they have any questions or wish to report an aggressive coyote. As previously noted, the City's Code Enforcement Division is trained to conduct property assessments to assist property owners in minimizing coyote attractants.

Under state law, coyotes are considered "non-game wildlife," therefore any residents can initiate action, at their own expense, to protect themselves and their property from coyote attacks, including trapping. A private trapper must be certified and licensed by the State of California. However, no private individual is authorized to discharge a

firearm within the City of Rancho Palos Verdes pursuant to Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code Section 9.08.010:

Except as otherwise provided in [Chapter 9.08], it shall be unlawful within the boundaries of the city for any person to fire, discharge, shoot or operate or to assist or participate in firing, discharging, shooting or operating any gun, revolver, pistol, firearm, spring gun, air gun, sling, slingshot or device designed or intended to discharge or capable of discharging any dangerous missile or any cartridge, shell, ammunition or device containing any explosive substance designed or intended to be used in or fired from any gun, revolver, pistol or firearm.

Public Outreach

In addition to conducting yard audits, the City's Code Enforcement Officers have been both proactive and reactive in canvassing City neighborhoods to raise awareness about deterrent measures to keep coyotes out of neighborhoods and adjoining canyon areas. They spend an average of 15 hours a week meeting with residents in response to calls and posting on the City's website to raise public awareness, including yard audits. On September 25, 2019, the City also held a neighborhood meeting held in the Headland Drive neighborhood with residents from the Sunnyside Ridge community. This and other neighborhood meetings held throughout the year have led to additional yard audits. Staff has found that residents are frequently unaware of the information and programs that the City has available to them, which is a sign that more outreach is needed and will continue during the next reporting period.

Participation in the Wildlife Watch Program

Wildlife Watch is a CDFW-administered program that is similar to a Neighborhood Watch program in that it enlists the participation of citizens to bring neighbors together, and helps train them to recognize and distinguish wildlife sightings, wildlife threats to public safety, and natural versus unnatural wildlife behavior, with an emphasis on coyotes. It also helps with the implementation of basic wildlife conflict prevention techniques, such as hazing. This program requires the participation of an entire neighborhood to keep coyotes out. During this 3rd quarter reporting period, Staff has coordinated with block captains in the following neighborhoods:

- Sunnyside Ridge
- Miraleste

In collaboration with block captains, Staff has been able to establish a single point-of-contact to address coyote related issues and to serve as the conduit between Staff and the neighborhood. Overall, the Wildlife Watch program continues to be an extremely beneficial tool for residents to deter coyote activity. Staff will continue to encourage additional neighborhoods to participate in this program.

Coyote Sighting Application and Dashboard

Last year, the City's Information Technology Staff launched a web-based coyote sighting application that the public can access from both mobile and desktop devices (<http://cityofrpv.maps.arcgis.com/apps/GeoForm/index.html?appid=819077a4e67f4e5dbc0c79a3d4004760>). The application benefits all the Peninsula cities, and although its development was led by the City's Staff, it was a collaborative effort with the cities of Rolling Hills Estates and Palos Verdes Estates, whose residents and Staff utilize this application as well.

The application provides information on coyote population and sighting trends. Residents report a coyote sighting and describe the coyote's behavior or incident. The reported information is documented and forwarded to City Staff. Additionally, a map of the Peninsula on the website identifies the location of the reported coyote and its activity.

In January 2019, the map was "refreshed" for the 2019 reporting period. As part of the last quarterly report on September 3, 2019, a total of 50 coyote sightings had been logged by app users. Attached to tonight's report is the 3rd quarter 2019 data and corresponding map for Rancho Palos Verdes (Attachment A), including a Coyote Sighting Quarterly Report Chart (Attachment B). The data shows a total of 171 coyote sightings had been logged in by app users, representing an increase of 121 reports during the current reporting period (August 24-November 24, 2019) as compared to the previous reporting period (May 21-August 23, 2019). This may be attributed to a combination of reasons including, among other things, increased public use of the app and/or increased coyote activity in the City.

To improve the public's ability to review the data collected via the coyote sighting app, the City's Information Technology Staff have also created a dashboard to view real-time coyote sighting information. The data on the dashboard is displayed using charts, widgets, maps and other visual elements. The dashboard can be viewed on the City's website at <https://www.rpvca.gov/CoyoteSightingDashboard>.

Wildlife Camera Network

Staff is researching implementing a new wildlife camera program as an added tool to the Coyote Management Plan tool chest. In doing so, Staff is exploring purchasing Wildlife Watch cameras also called "critter cams," to monitor coyote activity in specified hotspots throughout open space areas and private properties when conducting yard audits. The "critter cam" would allow Staff to monitor coyote movement, behaviors, and composition of alleged coyote packs based on sightings that have been identified to pose a potential threat. The data collected could be used to identify aggressive coyotes and to assist in determining whether future trapping is warranted. Staff will update the Council if and when it decides to implement this program.

CONCLUSION:

With the City's semi-rural topography, coyote sightings are not uncommon. Informing residents about typical coyote behavior and what can be done to deter coyotes from entering yards and neighborhoods is an important step in coyote management. Residents are encouraged to report coyote sightings and incidents using the City's tracking applications, and to report aggressive coyote behavior to the City's Code Enforcement Division for further investigation. Code Enforcement Staff will continue to take reactive and proactive steps to foster the coexistence of coyotes with the City's residents, businesses and visitors.

ALTERNATIVES:

In addition to the Staff recommendation, the following alternative action is available for the City Council's consideration:

1. Direct Staff to develop additional measures to address the City's coyote issues for the City Council's future consideration, such as the wildlife camera network described above.

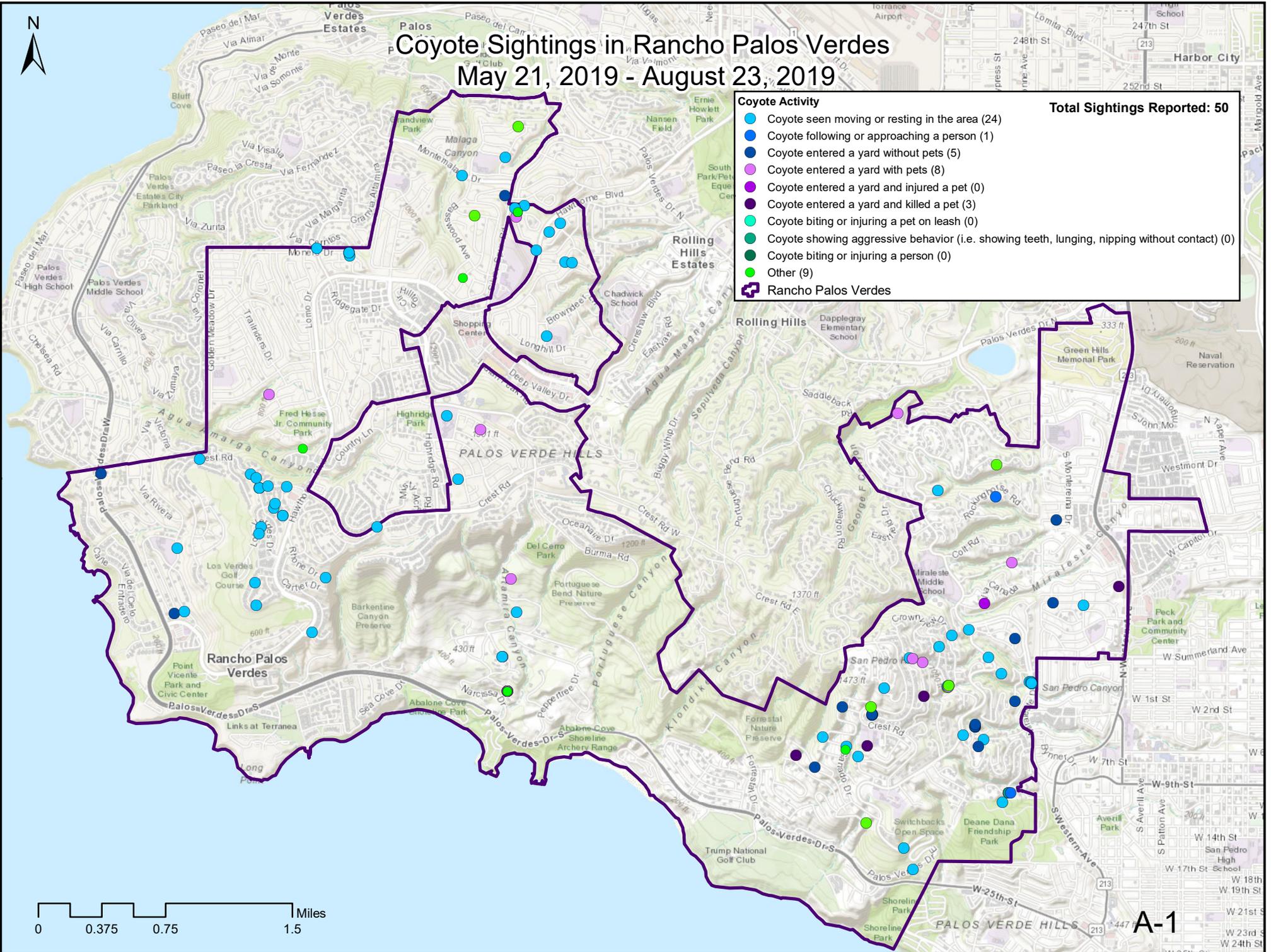
Coyote Sightings in Rancho Palos Verdes May 21, 2019 - August 23, 2019

Coyote Activity

- Coyote seen moving or resting in the area (24)
- Coyote following or approaching a person (1)
- Coyote entered a yard without pets (5)
- Coyote entered a yard with pets (8)
- Coyote entered a yard and injured a pet (0)
- Coyote entered a yard and killed a pet (3)
- Coyote biting or injuring a pet on leash (0)
- Coyote showing aggressive behavior (i.e. showing teeth, lunging, nipping without contact) (0)
- Coyote biting or injuring a person (0)
- Other (9)

Total Sightings Reported: 50

📍 Rancho Palos Verdes



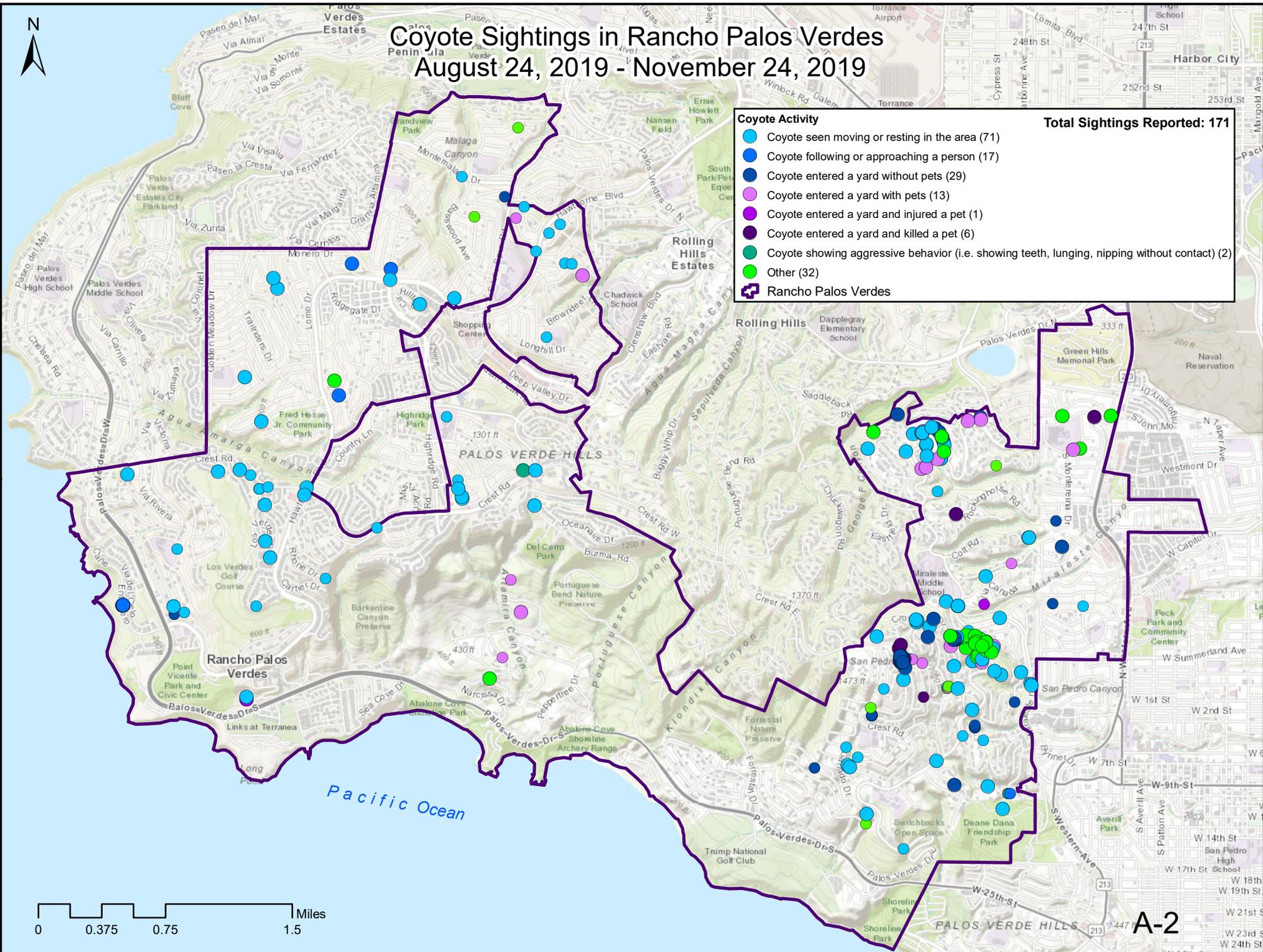
Coyote Sightings in Rancho Palos Verdes

August 24, 2019 - November 24, 2019

Coyote Activity

- Coyote seen moving or resting in the area (71)
- Coyote following or approaching a person (17)
- Coyote entered a yard without pets (29)
- Coyote entered a yard with pets (13)
- Coyote entered a yard and injured a pet (1)
- Coyote entered a yard and killed a pet (6)
- Coyote showing aggressive behavior (i.e. showing teeth, lunging, nipping without contact) (2)
- Other (32)
- Rancho Palos Verdes

Total Sightings Reported: 171



Coyote Sighting Quarterly Report Chart

Third Quarter

Categories	Second Quarter May 21 - August 23	Third Quarter August 24- November 24	Difference
Coyote Seen/Moving/Resting	24	71	47
Coyote Following or Approaching	1	17	16
Coyote Entered w/out Pets	5	29	24
Coyote Entered with Pets	8	13	5
Coyote Entered Yard & Injured a Pet	0	1	1
Coyote Entered Yard & Killed Pet	3	6	3
Coyote Bite Pet on Leash	0	0	0
Coyote Showing Aggressive Behavior	0	2	2
Coyote Biting or Injuring a Person	0	0	0
Other	9	32	23
Total Sightings Reports	50	171	121