

The Coyotes of Broomfield



Emily Beam Joelle Cicak

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A NEST Project



Emily Beam and Joelle Cicak

Nature, Environment, Science and Technology (NEST) Studio
for the Arts at the University of Colorado Boulder empowers,
facilitates and combines artistic practice and scientific
research to explore our common and disparate ways of
observing, recording, experimenting, and knowing.
[@nestcuboulder](#) | nest@colorado.edu | nestcuboulder.org

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A Note to the Broomfield Community

In the Spring of 2019 Emily and I were awarded a summer fellowship through NEST Studio for the Arts at the University of Colorado Boulder to conduct research on the coyotes living in the Broomfield area. The goal of this project aimed to familiarize the residents of Broomfield with their coyote neighbors. Coyotes, traditionally seen as dangerous pests, are actually extremely adept urban adaptors. They thrive in human constructed spaces and are successfully carving out a niche in these new, man-made environments.

This project places a special focus on introducing specific coyote individuals which inhabit the open spaces around Broomfield to their human neighbors. The open spaces we chose to research were significant for having high human traffic for recreational purposes. Special attention has been paid to portray the coyotes' personalities and physical traits within the drawings and in the descriptions, written by Emily. Through this book, we hope to spark greater understanding of our shared spaces, and to display that coyotes are not invasive interlopers, but exciting and important residents of the Front Range.

White Shoulders

White Shoulders is not the kind of coyote you notice right away. She stays low to the ground, blending near perfectly with summer grasses and low slung brambles. The larger reason, though, is probably because you're completely distracted by eight tumbling, ridiculously playful pups. It's only when you scale back, widen your view, that you notice that she's been there all along, sitting in the shade, watching you watch her pups. She has been as perfect a mother in the wild as I have ever seen - it is no small feat to give birth to eight pups in Spring and have each live until Fall. When dusk comes and fewer people are around, she will use bits of plastic to play with them and incite games of tag. The only time I have ever seen her act anything close to cross was during weaning, when she would have to not-so-gently remind her pups that dinner was not coming out of her teats. She has not come out unscathed. Her tail is chewed by eight little, teething mouths, and she is skinnier than her pack mates. I spent three and a half months with White Shoulders and her family before they disappeared out of what had been their territory. I wasn't expecting it, but then again, I have no right to have any expectations while working with coyotes, an animal known for being highly flexible and inconsistent. I don't yet know where they are now, but something tells me to trust White Shoulder's judgement.





White Shoulder's Pups

It is inevitable for wildlife researchers to feel close to their subjects: you spend hours out in the field tracking them, following them, and mostly just watching them. Some of those moments come easily, but a lot more are hard won. This is always true when it comes to pups. These three, of eight, are a representation of the time and effort it takes to not only find a den, but to settle there - to become part of the environment in such a way that a mother and babysitter alike don't react to your presence. After months of tracking the adults, they had deemed me nonthreatening enough to allow my presence. Getting to sit and watch these pups from a distance was a demonstration of trust. A surface level, tenuous trust, but a trust nonetheless. Collecting data on this pack was a constant reminder of that trust, and how that was a heavy thing with layers of latent responsibility. It was my job to collect data, but more than that, it was my job to do right by these animals who could just have easily slipped among the brambles, out of eyesight. Instead, they allowed me to see them, and in doing so, it was also my job to repay the favor. And how could we ever repay that favor to these animals, to all wildlife? In quiet moments spent watching the pups sunbathe, or pounce and prod upon each other, you find yourself thinking about that question a lot.

Bold Pup

It is no secret that animals have personalities, however, sometimes people find it easier to imagine willful cats or playful dogs, than it is to imagine personality traits assigned to wildlife. Despite that tendency, any time at all spent watching these animals will show you a pack with unique individuals. Sometimes those differentiations take years to pick up on and understand. Others - well - others walk right up to you. This is Bold Pup, out of the litter of eight. When I first spotted this litter, they were tucked away from prying eyes deep in the brush. If not for Bold Pup's head popping out to get a better look at the surroundings every two minutes, I would have walked past without ever knowing. As the pups aged and developed, Bold Pup was always my pin in the map - if Bold Pup wasn't visible, the pups were probably in the den sleeping; if the pup was visible, then it was only a matter of time before the rest of the litter gathered the courage to come out and join him. Bold Pup would walk up to inspect me, as if I were an especially interesting tree or magpie. It is absolutely never my goal as a researcher (or as a human coexisting with wildlife) to directly interact with coyotes without extremely well founded reasons to do so. My entire work in this region was built around minimizing disturbance to the nth degree, but this pup's curiosity was constantly proving problematic.



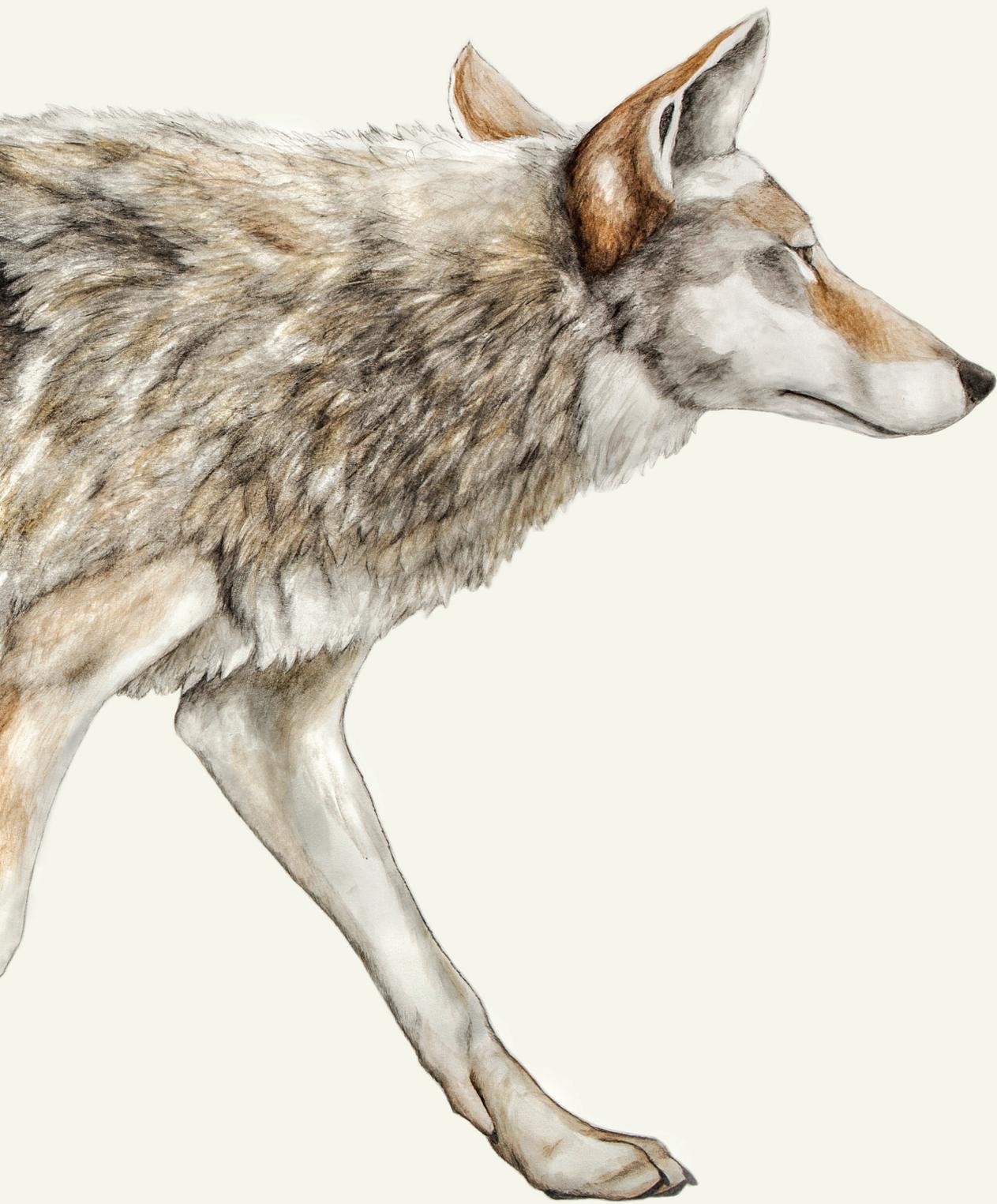
Lil' Eyebrows

I was warned about Lil' Eyebrows - some residents told me they didn't feel safe walking in this particular territory at night, or that they couldn't walk their dogs without being followed. It took a little bit of time for me to get to know Lil' Eyebrows and his or her pack (coyotes are notoriously difficult to sex noninvasively). This group let me hang around for over a month before letting me see them materialize out of their hiding spots as if they had been out and visible the whole time. What I have encountered is not an aggressive animal, but rather a highly curious and bold individual that likes to size up situations for itself. In the times that I've startled Lil' Eyebrows (or rather we have startled each other), this coyote doesn't immediately run. Instead, Lil' Eyebrows will stand still and stare directly at me. Occasionally, Lil' Eyebrows will bark, too, though to me it doesn't feel threatening. It comes across as more of a backwards experiment to see what I'll do, and suddenly I am the study animal in question. I can understand how this little animal's stare can feel aggressive - it is bold and assessing and I don't know that we are so used to being so wholly appraised by a wild animal.



Dot





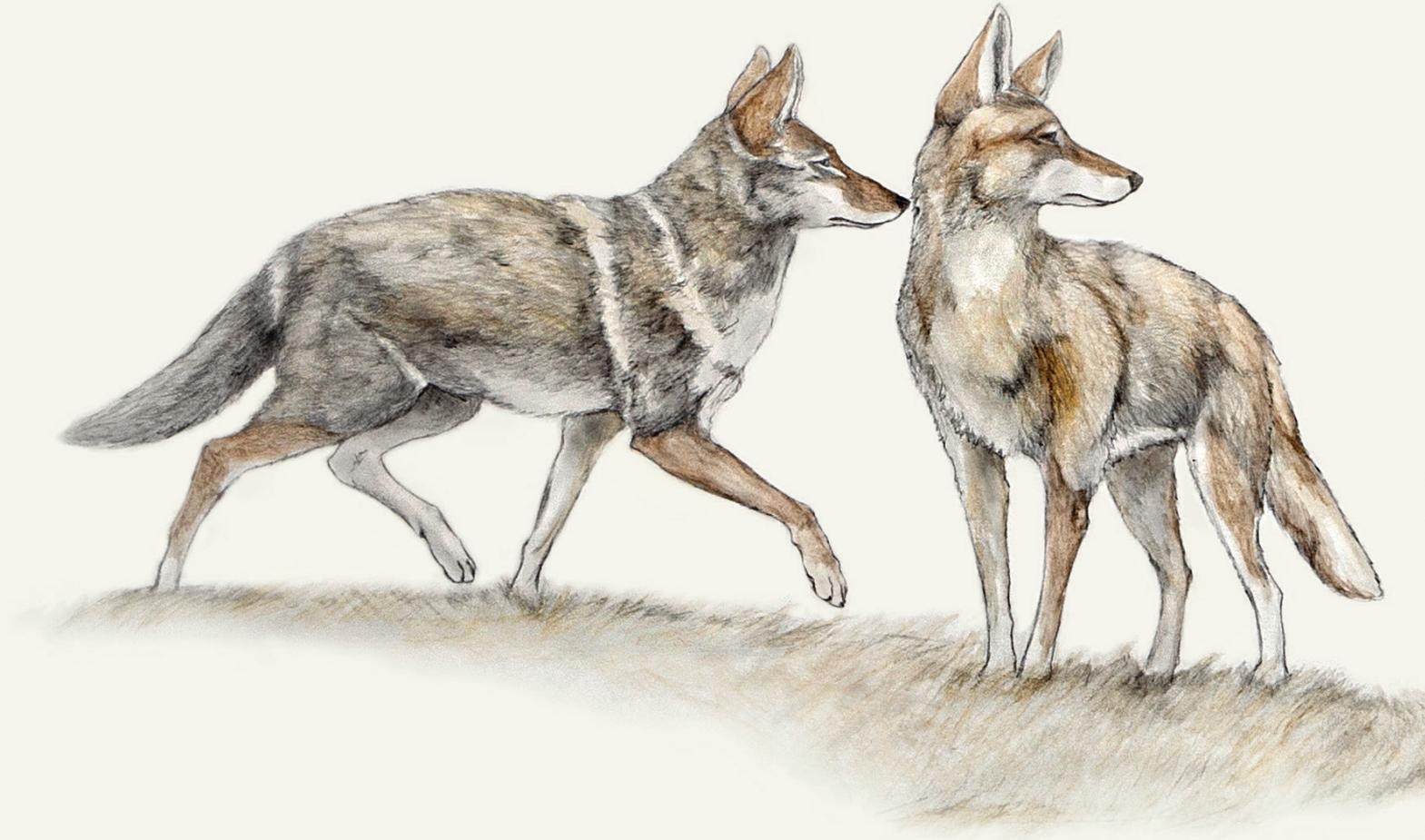
Dot

I think that I will always hold a special regard for Dot. After all, she was the first coyote we identified. More than that, she seemed to be a perfect representation of the inherent mystery and cunning of the coyote. For one, she kept her three (maybe more) pups hidden from our research team the longest: it was well into the summer, once the pups should have been out of the den for weeks, before we got our first glimpse of a pup trailing behind her in the tall grass.

On the last day of research collection on her site, I watched her move in and out of the brambles through my binoculars with bated breath. It is a memory seared into my brain because she is a beautiful animal, but probably more so because in my last moments of research collection, I saw three identical coyotes trot out, one after another, with the exact same dot on their tails. Proof, once again, that the coyote is the best animal for instilling humility in any researcher.

The Yearlings

This group of yearlings was a boisterous one, often six strong, and still full of puppy energy. Most mornings found them running as if their lives depended on it, playing keep away with whatever log or scrap of trash was the toy du jour.





The Yearlings

Coyotes are notable for many reasons, in part due to their sociability. Unlike wolves, their near evolutionary cousin, coyote social structure can be defined as fission-fusion, which merely means that they can be found both alone and in packs, depending on which strategy is most advantageous. Some would view any bonds among individuals as highly fragile, ready to be broken as soon as the odds change. To me, though, it makes these bonds all the stronger - these animals could set off alone, but have decided not to.



Suggestions for Living with Coyotes

Guard yourself and your pets

Never leave your pets unattended, even within your own back yard. Coyotes are opportunistic hunters and will take the opportunity if they see a lone pet.

Attend your pet. Coyotes can scale a six foot tall fence. Standing at the door will not deter coyotes from approaching your pet. Colorado Parks and Wildlife recommends always being within five feet of your pet.

Keep cats indoors.

Keep dogs on a short leash (six feet or less).

Avoid unknown or potential den sites and areas of thick vegetation.

Do not allow dogs to “play” with coyotes or foxes.

Do not leave pet food and water bowls outside.

Never feed coyotes. It is illegal in Broomfield based on Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) regulations.

Yell, clap hands, blow a whistle, and try to make yourself look larger if you have a close encounter with a coyote. Hazing helps keep coyotes wild.

Assess Your Yard for Potential Risks

Remove small ponds and fountains.

Remove feeders or clean up spilled seeds.

Make gardens inaccessible for coyotes.

Keep compost fully enclosed.

Clean up drippings and food around BBQ grills after every use.

Secure all trash containers with locking lids. Periodically clean cans to reduce residual odors.

Trim or reduce vegetation to reduce hiding places or denning locations.

Restrict access under decks and sheds, around woodpiles, or any other structure that can provide cover or denning sites for coyotes or their prey.

Have noise makers on hand to scare coyotes who may enter your yard, such as whistles, pots, pans, and horns.

*these are just a few suggestions to reduce conflict and do not replace being in the yard with your pets. While these suggestions are aimed at mitigating conflict, please be aware that conflict may still occur. All suggestions are sourced from [Broomfield.org/Coyote](https://www.broomfield.org/Coyote)

About the Authors



Emily Beam is a graduate student in the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She is originally from the Southeast, but came out west to work in conservation. For now, her work focuses on urban coyote behavior in the Front Range, but she is excited to expand her study area and study breadth in the coming years.



Joelle Cicak is a multimedia artist from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Currently, she is studying to receive her Masters in Ceramics at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her work focuses on human relationships with animals and the many complexities, contradictions, and rarities that exist within this subject matter.