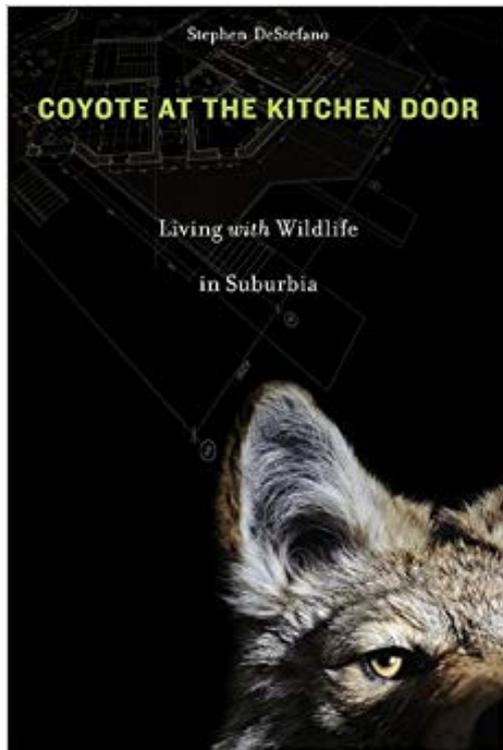


# Coyote at the Kitchen Door: Living with Wildlife in Suburbia

by Stephen DeStefano



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**ISBN:** 0674035569

**ISBN13:** 978-0674035560

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**Book title:** Coyote at the Kitchen Door: Living with Wildlife in Suburbia

**Pages:** 224 pages

**Publisher:** Harvard University Press; 1st Edition edition (January 15, 2010)

**Language:** English

**Category:** Biological Sciences

**Size PDF version:** 1663 kb

**Size ePUB version:** 1572 kb

**Size DJVU version:** 1496 kb

**Other formats:** lrf txt docx lit

A moose frustrates commuters by wandering onto the highway; a cougar stalks his prey through suburban backyards; an alligator suns himself in a strip mall parking lot. Such stories, which regularly make headline news, highlight the blurred divide that now exists between civilization and wilderness.

In *Coyote at the Kitchen Door*, Stephen DeStefano draws on decades of experience as a biologist and conservationist to examine the interplay between urban sprawl and wayward wildlife. As he explores what our insatiable appetite for real estate means for the health and wellbeing of animals and ourselves, he highlights growing concerns, such as the loss of darkness at night because of light pollution. DeStefano writes movingly about the contrasts between constructed and natural environments and about the sometimes cherished, sometimes feared place that nature holds in our modern lives, as we cluster into cities yet show an increasing interest in the natural world.

Woven throughout the book is the story of one of the most successful species in North America: the coyote. Once restricted to the prairies of the West, this adaptable animal now inhabits most of North America—urban and wild alike. DeStefano traces a female coyote's movements along a winding path between landscapes in which her species learned to survive and flourish. *Coyote at the Kitchen Door* asks us to rethink the meaning of progress and create a new suburban wildlife ethic.



## Reviews of the **Coyote at the Kitchen Door: Living with Wildlife in Suburbia** by Stephen DeStefano

*Vikus*

I purchased this book shortly after an encounter with a coyote at my back door. It was calmly surveying my yard, checking if I had left out any cat food. It looked very healthy - but then, there have been several small dogs missing in the neighborhood lately. My own cat is a smart old guy and quite sneaky himself. At 14 is very old for a feral. (He is mine only by his claim on my lap. He avoids everyone else.) This particular coyote and its mate are raising a couple of pups and I wish them all the luck. It's a challenging environment for them, in the middle of a city. I really enjoyed the book and was completely absorbed in the life of the female coyote. Would recommend the book to anyone with any interest in these critters.

So, I warn the neighbors to keep their dogs and cats inside and I keep watch for the coyotes at my door. My connection with my wild side.

*Camper*

Half story of coyote, half story of people. Not interested in the people part, not that interesting or relevant.

*Acrobat*

Excellent read. Highly recommend!

*Agagamand*

The book made a few interesting points along the way, but never grabbed you and made you want to continue reading. An interesting life I'm sure, but if there was a message here I couldn't find it. It's almost like the discussion on habitat. The book was very general (habitat) and was never specific about any one thing (habitat for a particular species).

*Malaunitly*

Interesting look at what we should be looking at as far as the environment and our everyday life - Very readable and thoughtful.

*Dagdarad*

DeStefano writes in a surprisingly autobiographical way. At first glance I thought he was over-indulgent, telling about his boyhood adventures, his cars, or his bouts of personal orneriness. But when you think about it, the stories do lead to real points to be made about our need for nature, the footprint of our road network on wildlife, or getting in touch with our inner predator. It's a neighborly book that makes the local beasts into neighbors rather than pests to be rubbed out. DeStefano makes the ecologically political personal, and even loses patience with anything less.

*Dream*

Destefano's work does what it's set out to do, essays on living with suburbia. This isn't a textbook on Urban Wildlife but a personal account on the continuing spread of development into wild areas and the stories of the animals (coyote, moose, beaver, birds and others) who share space in our not-so-

wild communities.

The author serves as a good, enlightened guide along this read and we're introduced to scientific study on urban ecology along the way. I wished there was more on the subject but clearly this seems to be a field that is in its infancy in context of books written on the subject.

Coyote is focused on the most in this work (as well as it should, it's the animal who's garnered the most legendary status in our neighborhoods) and gives us a narrative into their lives in the wild and in the borders between undeveloped and developed spaces.

I found the book worth reading especially for his personal accounts of wildlife and his perspectives on urban development, wildlife and especially coyote (Chapter 9 "Coyote Spirits" is a haunting, gripping and beautiful chapter). He ends on a positive note that we do have the ability to change our ways but I wish he gave us more to work on and less of what we've may heard before from infamous Aldo Leopold (whom he recites and relies on too much in my opinion). In the end, more book works must be published in this field and I hope Stephen publishes another more heavier book on the subject.

Stephen weaves tales of his life's work as a wildlife biologist and brings it home to our own backyard. From Polar Bears in Churchill, Condors in Peru to the Coyote down the block. This is a well written and interesting perspective on our place on the planet, our wild neighbors, and our continued relationship with them.

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