



River Raisin

WATERSHED COUNCIL

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Coyote Chaperones by Meija Knafel

From spring to autumn each year the world comes alive with color and sound. Leaves unfurl, flowers bloom, the wind rolls across the landscape. Recently returned migratory birds sing from dawn until well into the daytime. It's even noisy after dark, with coyotes yodeling through the wee hours of the night!



With a scientific name like "barking dog", is it any surprise that one of the main ways the species *Canis latrans* communicates is through their vocalizations? Small packs led by two parent animals are often heard vocalizing during the denning season, which begins in April or May and continues through the end of the summer. These family groups are made up of a monogamous adult pair of male and female coyotes, young adults from previous years, and the young pups. Sometimes a non-related outsider may be accepted as part of the group, but coyote packs are usually a family affair.

With puppies needing constant feeding and care at the den-site, the adults in the group become more active in their search for food. Coyotes are omnivores who may eat anything from rodents and raccoons to berries, young

fawns, and even unattended garbage cans or outdoor pet food. Depending on how much food there is and how easy it is to find, their home ranges can vary in size from just a few square miles to well over 10 square miles.



While puppies are especially young and vulnerable in March and April, coyotes will staunchly protect their den location. One behavior that you may experience is a coyote "escort" if you happen to wander too closely to this important site. To the unaware passer-by jogger or dog-walker, this can look like an ominous confrontation where one or more adult coyotes obviously follow you in broad view. Dog-walkers are the most likely target of this behavior, as another canine in the territory can look like a direct threat to the coyote den.

Don't panic! This is not a predatory stalking, it's a clear communication of "I'm here and you're making me nervous, please leave the premises immediately."



(continued on the next page)

MISSION

To inspire behaviors that promote stewardship, improve water quality, and encourage public participation to protect, preserve, and enhance the River Raisin Watershed

RRWC seeks volunteers and members to achieve our mission!

Please contact us to find out how you can help with or participate in the various activities outlined in these pages.

Our success in improving water quality in the River Raisin Watershed depends on you!

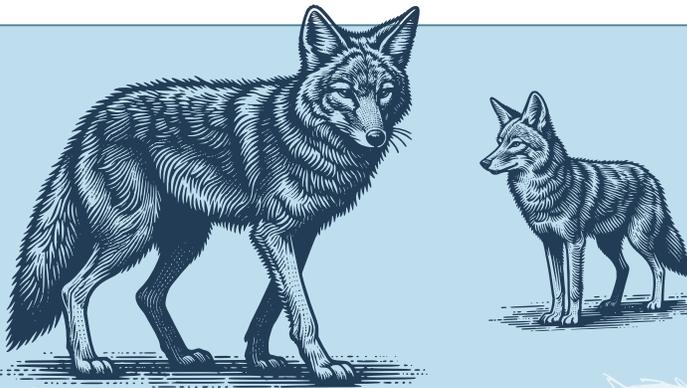
Contact us by phone:
(517)264-4754

Contact us by email:
admin@riverraisin.org

Coyote Chaperones by Meija Knafel

Coyotes are an important part of your local ecosystem, and provide many benefits to the territories they hold. One of the most important is their reduction of rodent species, which can often be a pest and carry Lyme disease! Smaller rodent populations mean fewer opportunities for the spread of this tick-borne illness.

So this spring enjoy the noisy songs of the coyote family in your area, and remember to stay *SMART* if a coyote escort kindly asks you to leave their den alone until the puppies are big enough to go on the move!



The Wolf Conservation Center has an especially SMART system for coyote encounters:



Stop! Make sure your dog is leashed and can't approach the coyote.



Make yourself bigger! Raise your arms and square your shoulders. As a wild animal, coyotes are hesitant to get into tangles that could result in an injury.



Announce your presence and let the coyote know you're here. You might call "Hey, coyote!" or "Go on, coyote!"



Retreat! This "escorting" behavior is a result of getting too close to the den-site, so slowly backing up the way you came will take you away from the resource they're protecting; their puppies.



Teach! Tell your neighbors and other dog-owners about coyote "escorting" behavior and how to respond.

From the Executive Director's Desk with Stephen May



Looking back on 2023 the RRWC has been busy, full of energy and change. Beginning with a renewal of a lease with the City of Tecumseh for an additional two years leasing the A.J. Smith house for our satellite office, continuation of the administration of the Brooklyn Dam removal, finishing up the RRWC environmental report card, engaging in farmer-led conservation practices, strategic planning, development and outreach efforts, volunteer and donor tracking, watershed management planning – five year strategic plan, providing internship opportunities and water quality monitoring. If that was not enough, staff has dedicated countless hours of time to fairs, festivals, raffles, classes, tours, nature walks and participation on several boards within the watershed.

Looking forward to 2024 as RRWC continues to

look for opportunities to fund our activities and support the current staffing levels. RRWC has recently applied for several grants to support operations and activities and to continue outreach efforts in the classroom, workshops and nature walks. Staff continues to offer a varied monthly workshop opportunities funded by grants from EGLE. Those grants and partnerships are invaluable for the community as they provide the resources to host, provide materials and finance staff to plan and implement those opportunities. Thanks again to the Erb Family Foundation for their financial support with general operations, watershed communications and the farmer-led group grants. RRWC staff is creating an unforgettable experience for our community and watershed as they work to engage awareness of our vital resources! **Stay Connected in YOUR watershed in 2024!**

RRWC are Bringing Programs to You!

The RRWC has captured funding for two new ways to have fun and protect the River:

Nature Exploration

Would you rather have more screen time or more time playing and learning outdoors? The RRWC is offering the second option to kids, adults, families throughout 2024. *Nature Exploration* brings nature to the classroom for a little while, and then brings the classroom back out to nature. Exploration sessions include native seed collection; mushroom, nut & berry scavenging; rain gardening; owl prowling; beekeeping; worm-composting and more, OH MY! Some spots are still open.

To stay up to date with these programs, follow our social media and visit www.riverraisin.org/upcoming-events. Lydia Lopez is the program coordinator for these classes. Contact her at: waterstewardship@riverraisin.org.

Forest to Faucets

Trees are a river's best friend. They capture and slow runoff, create soil structure, build nutrients across the landscape, provide shade, and stabilize banks. They also tend to raise residential property values. Trees will be available at various locations throughout the watershed starting with the Washtenaw County Conservation District's Spring Tree and Shrub Sale. These subsidized trees are on pre-order at: www.washtenawcd.org/tree--shrub-distributions.html

If you are interested in planting a group of trees or a micro-forest with your lake or homeowner's association, church or community group, we'd love to hear from you!

Dreissenid Mussel Abstract by Isabelle Uganski

I am currently a senior Environmental Science student at Siena Heights University. As I complete my final year, I have the opportunity to explore invasive mussel populations within the Great Lakes region.

Aquatic invasive species are becoming a more prevalent and pressing issue for freshwater ecosystems as they outcompete native organisms. Zebra (*Dreissena polymorpha*) and quagga (*Dreissena bugensis*) mussels are no exception, invading freshwater rivers, inland lakes, and our Great Lakes at great lengths and speed. They originate from brackish waters of Eurasia, coming here as larvae that were captured and redistributed in the ballast water of large shipment vessels. Yet, they are well-acclimated to the freshwater environments of North America. These non-native organisms are ecosystem engineers, often altering the substrate and natural conditions of their habitat. They are also capable of changing the ecological cycles, filtering the water, and consuming potential food resources for fish and other native mussel species. Their high adaptability allows them to grow under a myriad of conditions, making them

versatile and resilient to change. Measuring length, mass, growth, density, and abundance, all can contribute to our knowledge of these mussel populations and the progression of their invasion. My senior research project investigated the role that depth has in the quagga mussel populations of Lake Michigan, to better understand their habitat preferences and expansion. How do these immobile organisms expand their territory and habitat? They have planktonic larvae that can be swept away by water currents, waves, and downstream the river, until they settle on the bottom of the aquatic environment. The risk of these invasive species to the River Raisin is the interference with natural food webs and chemical cycles within our streams, inland lakes, and the Western Lake Erie basin. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has a Great Lakes Aquatic Nonindigenous Species Map that showcases many invasive species habitats across Michigan, including the quagga and zebra mussel. Check it out to find local occurrences and more information!

- Isabelle Uganski, Administrative Assistant



Upcoming Events & Programs

Nature Exploration Events

- April 26th - Tecumseh, MI | **Spring Foraging Class**
- May 8th - Tipton, MI | **Composting 101**
- May 9th - Monroe, MI | **Nocturnal Night Walk: Bats**
- May 11th - Tipton, MI | **Day on the Farm**
- May 8th - Tipton, MI | **Composting 101**
- June 7th - Tecumseh, MI | **Paddle Trip with Interpretation**
- June 8th - Blissfeild & Saline, MI | **Fishing Program**
- June 12th - Saline, MI | **Composting 101**
- June 21st - Hudson, MI | **Nocturnal Night Walk: Nature at Night**

Volunteer Events

- April 27th - Monroe, MI | **River Raisin Battlefeild Clean-Up**
- May 13th - Monroe, MI | **Macroinvertebrate Collection**
- May 13th - Dundee, MI | **Macroinvertebrate Collection**
- May 15th - Saline, MI | **Saline River Preserve Clean-Up**
- May 15th - Petersburg, MI | **Native Plantings**
- May 16th - Milan, MI | **Macroinvertebrate Collection**
- May 16th - Saline, MI | **Macroinvertebrate Collection**
- May 17th - Onsted, MI | **Native Plantings**
- May 17th - Tecumseh, MI | **Macroinvertebrate Collection**
- May 17th - Tecumseh, MI | **Native Plantings**
- June 6th - Saline, MI | **Trash Clean-Up**

Other Events

- April 12th, May 17th & June 15th | **Watercolor the Watershed Classes**
- April 24th, May 22nd & June 20th | **River Raisin Birders Meet-Up**
- June 1st - Manchester, MI | **River Raisin Kayak & Canoe Race**
- June 1st - Tecumseh, MI | **Tecumseh Kiwanis Kayak & Canoe Race**
- June 1st - Saline, MI | **Washtenaw Native Plant Expo**
- June 14th - Manchester, MI | **Trivia Night with RRWC**

For more information (including times and specific locations) or to register, please check out our website at riverraisin.org

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE & STAFF

- Harry Sheehan, Executive Committee Chair
- John Calhoun, Vice Chair
- Sybil Kolon, Secretary
- KZ Bolton, Treasurer
- Trudi Cooper, Member
- David Hoffman, Member
- Phil Kittredge, Member
- Stephen May, Executive Director
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riverraisinassistant@gmail.com

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INATURALIST:
[@RiverRaisinWatershedCouncil](https://www.inaturalist.org/organizations/RiverRaisinWatershedCouncil)



YOUTUBE:
[@River Raisin Watershed Council](https://www.youtube.com/@RiverRaisinWatershedCouncil)

River Raisin Watershed Council wants to extend a special thank you to our 2023/2024 Donors!

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