



A record of a North American Raccoon *Procyon lotor* charging at a Coyote *Canis latrans*

Samuel I. ZEVELOFF

Abstract

The video of a brief encounter between a Coyote *Canis latrans* and a North American Raccoon *Procyon lotor*, in a suburban backyard in California, is described. In the footage, the Raccoon chases the Coyote, supporting other observations that, in some contexts, Raccoons do not fear Coyotes and may behave aggressively toward them.

Keywords: intraguild competition, mesocarnivore interactions, suburban wildlife

In this note, I comment on a short video of an encounter between a Coyote *Canis latrans* and a North American Raccoon *Procyon lotor*. I have not found any other images revealing the behaviours depicted herein between an individual Raccoon and a Coyote, nor have they been reported elsewhere. Despite their co-occurrence in much of North America, there are few videos or still images of the interactions between these two species. A Google search revealed a few that have been posted by hobbyists. One shows two Raccoons aggressively chasing a Coyote as it tried to eat the carcass of a small mammal on the ground; it is not stated where this occurred nor is any context given (Stealth Cam 2011).

The footage herein (Supplementary Video) was captured by a home security camera at 22h45 (Pacific Time), 11 July 2021 in the backyard of a house in a suburban neighbourhood in Daly City, California, USA. Daly City is in San Mateo County, due south of San Francisco. The homeowner, Jim Jacobs, sent me this video.

In the video, first a Coyote, possibly a sub-adult, given its size, comes in from the left and runs across the yard. It appears to be heading toward, and possibly intent on attacking something as its head is down. Less than a second later, the Coyote re-enters the frame from the right (its head raised) and a Raccoon follows closely after it, apparently chasing it away. This is the sole time this kind of interaction was recorded at this house. Though Raccoons have been prevalent there for several years, Coyotes have been observed there only within the year prior to this recording, according to the homeowner.

Coyotes are a significant cause of the mortality of other canids, such as Kit Foxes *Vulpes macrotis* (Ralls & White 1995) and Swift Foxes *Vulpes velox* (Sovada et al. 1998). The impact of Coyote predation on Raccoon populations is not well understood and may vary considerably with circumstances. Kamler & Gipson (2004) found that a high Coyote density in Kansas contributed to their heightened predation on Raccoons and Virginia Opossums *Didelphis virginiana*.

In Michigan, Rogers & Caro (1998) postulated that Coyotes indirectly decreased nest predation on Song Sparrows *Melospiza melodia* by reducing Raccoon abundance, ostensibly the area's main nest predator. Nevertheless, it has been more commonly reported that Raccoon populations generally do not suffer high mortality from predators, including Coyotes. Aside from the aforementioned studies, there is no apparent evidence that Coyote predation has a significant impact on Raccoon populations (e.g. Gehrt & Clark 2003, Gerht & Prange 2007, Zeveloff 2017).

Chitwood et al. (2020) found that Raccoons did not even seem to fear Coyotes while they were together at bait stations in their North Carolina study. The footage herein offers additional evidence for this. Indeed, if the behaviours depicted in this video and the one referred to above are representative of a broader pattern, Coyotes are at least occasionally deterred by Raccoons. Given the increasing prevalence of both species in urban and suburban settings, coupled with the rising use of camera-traps to observe wildlife, including by hobbyists, there are likely to be more recorded interactions between Coyotes and Raccoons, which may improve our understanding of them (see Nelson & Fijn 2013).

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Samuel I. Zeveloff

Department of Zoology, Weber State University,
Ogden, UT 84404-2505, USA.
Email: szeveloff@weber.edu