



Wildlife Monitoring Program 2024 Summary



A coyote west of Sagamore. Photo by Peter Ruprecht.

Sponsored by the
Open Space Advisory Committee

Introduction:

The Superior Wildlife Monitoring program, sponsored by the Open Space Advisory Committee, completed its second full year of reporting in 2024. This community volunteer effort is designed to build an observational database of wildlife activity within the town borders and closely adjacent properties. By increasing our knowledge of where wildlife is present and the behaviors of the wildlife common to our area, the Town can continue to limit human/wildlife conflicts, increase relevant educational opportunities for citizens, and better ensure the protection of our wildlife. In addition, the wildlife monitoring program will provide the Town with the opportunity to document and tell the story of our commitment to co-existence with wildlife, ranging from the original Town design incorporating wildlife corridors to today's monitoring and educational programs. The monitoring program observes and supports a broad range of native species, including coyote, fox, bobcat, deer, elk, beaver, raccoon, muskrat and skunk.

In 2024, volunteers reported sightings via an easy online form, and there was no minimum number of observations required per month.

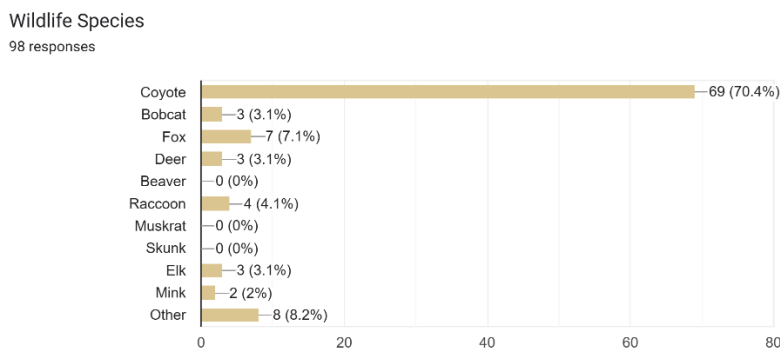
This monitoring program is in addition to the successful Raptor Monitoring Program being managed and staffed by town volunteers.

2024 Results: A Changing Landscape

From the seven volunteers in the pilot program, the program has established a committed base of volunteers and observations as outlined in the table below:

	2022	2023	2024
Number of Participants	7	35 total, 14 with multiple observations	19 total, 13 with multiple observations
Number of Observations	37	132	98
Wildlife Observed	81% coyotes	55% coyote, 34% bobcat	69% coyote, 3% bobcat, 7 % fox

The chart below shows a more detailed breakdown of the species reported in town:



2024 Progress and Takeaways

- 2023 was the year of the bobcat in Superior, but 2024 shaped up differently. **Bobcats were only observed three times in Town**, twice in a neighborhood north of Coalton and once near Calmante. Ashley DeLaup, the Town's wildlife ecologist, posits that the Marshall Fire was disruptive to the pathways, territories and cover for these normally shy animals, causing them to be seen more often. Now several years post fire, they have likely adapted to new pathways and cover has grown back, making them less visible to residents.
- After no reports of red fox in 2023, the fox has made a reappearance in Superior. There were **seven reports of fox in 2024** in various parts of town.
- **Our coyote population is struggling with mange**; most coyote observations record some level of infection from mild to severe, and there's one known case of transmission to a resident pet dog. See the discussion of an educational program to discourage the use of rodenticides in the next section to consider the role of humans in the spread of this disease. Below are photos, both heartwarming and heartbreaking, of our local coyote population. Note the varying levels of mange – from the trademark skinny tail in the left photo, a healthy animal in the middle, to an animal suffering and likely struggling to survive on the right.



- While coyote observations have come from various areas around town, including west of Sagamore and at Hodgson-Harris Reservoir (HHR), much of the consistent **coyote activity is centered around Bowes Pond**. We believe there's likely a mated pair, a juvenile, a 2024 pup, and potentially one other animal.
- In a significant advancement for the wildlife monitoring program, **OSAC approved the purchase of a trail camera** to monitor wildlife activity. Given the concentration of wildlife, and in particular coyotes, in the Bowes Pond area, the camera was installed in that area in mid-December. Results will be shared with OSAC as images become available. Future/additional sites for a trail camera include the newly purchased lots zoned as natural open space in Original Town and the culvert crossing under McCaslin near Calmante.
- Significant work has been undertaken to launch **a new reporting platform for 2025 called [CitSci](#)**. The first two years of the program, reporting was done through a simple Google form. With CitSci, we'll add the ability to communicate with the team through the platform, as well as enhance reporting.
- Work is underway to address the top recommendation from last year's Wildlife Monitoring Summary Report, **an educational program designed to discourage the use of rodenticides**. Rodenticides pose a significant threat to wildlife that was not the intended target of the poison through a process called biomagnification. Rodenticide residues build up in rodent carcasses to

levels many times the lethal dose, exposing predators and scavengers to large amounts of poison. A rodent that has ingested poison but not yet died can also pass the toxins on to any predator that eats it. These secondary poisonings are a significant cause of death among many raptor species and also affect bobcats and coyotes. As evidenced by the reports from the program volunteers and the photos above, many coyotes in town have mange, a condition that can be exacerbated by exposure to anticoagulant rodenticides.

Progress on this initiative includes:

- Volunteers in the Wildlife Monitoring Program and Wildlife Encouragement Team staffed a booth at National Trails Day with extensive materials outlining the dangers of rodenticides.
- OSAC is preparing a plan and recommendations related to rodenticides, including a proposed communication plan, that will be presented to the Town Council in the first half of 2025.
- A volunteer has worked with Friends of Coal Creek, a local nonprofit organization, to publish information on the [dangers of rodenticides](#).

Recommendations for 2025:

- **Implement the vigorous public education campaign** outlined above to discourage the use of all rodenticides outdoors.
- **Leave dead trees in open space areas** due to their value as a food source, habitat, and hiding place for a variety of wildlife species.
- Consider and adopt as many of the Wildlife Encouragement Team's suggestions related to the **Coyote Ridge Master Plan** as reasonable.
- **Conserve the remaining Plains Cottonwoods** in Town and plant new Plains Cottonwoods as replacements for lost or removed older trees.

Coming in 2025:

2025 WILDLIFE MONITORING TRAINING
All Ages | Community Center
Want to be an advocate for our wildlife and contribute in data tracking? Join the Wildlife Monitoring Program this 2025 season, and connect with other wildlife enthusiasts and volunteers from the community. Attend this year's training and learn how to get involved. This program tracks wildlife activity by reporting sightings of wildlife such as: coyotes, foxes, bobcats, deer, elk, beavers, raccoons, muskrats and snapping turtles.
1/07 Tuesday 5:30-7 p.m. FREE



A training session for 2025 volunteers is scheduled for January 7th at the Community Center. Wildlife ecologist Ashley DeLaup will lead the session, which was promoted through various Town communications vehicles including the Recreation Guide, PROS newsletter, and social media.

Results of the 2025 monitoring program, including images from the new trail camera, will be reported quarterly to the Parks, Recreation and Open Space director and ranger for the Town of Superior, as well as to the Open Space Advisory Committee.

Acknowledgements:

Report prepared by Tracey Bain, OSAC Liaison and Program Coordinator.

We are grateful for the observational work and data reporting by the volunteers in the 2024 wildlife monitoring program. The following volunteers each contributed observations: Joann Maneri (17 submissions), Peter Ruprecht (13 submissions), Jean Folsom, Hana Orel, Sandy Hardy-Reigel (11 submissions), Bonny Roberts, Jamie Dixon (six submissions), Karen Repine, Kurt Gutjahr, Dana Duckman, Gayle and Rob Welch, Vanessa Volin, Ellen Horowitz, Sara DeGroot, Jeff Krause (four submissions), Brad Clayton, and Stephanie Miller.

The program participants are also grateful for the involvement and assistance from Phary Om, Town Ranger during the 2024 reporting period.

Photo credits to Jeff Krause and Peter Ruprecht.

For more information about the wildlife monitoring program, or to volunteer, please contact OSAC@superiorcolorado.gov.