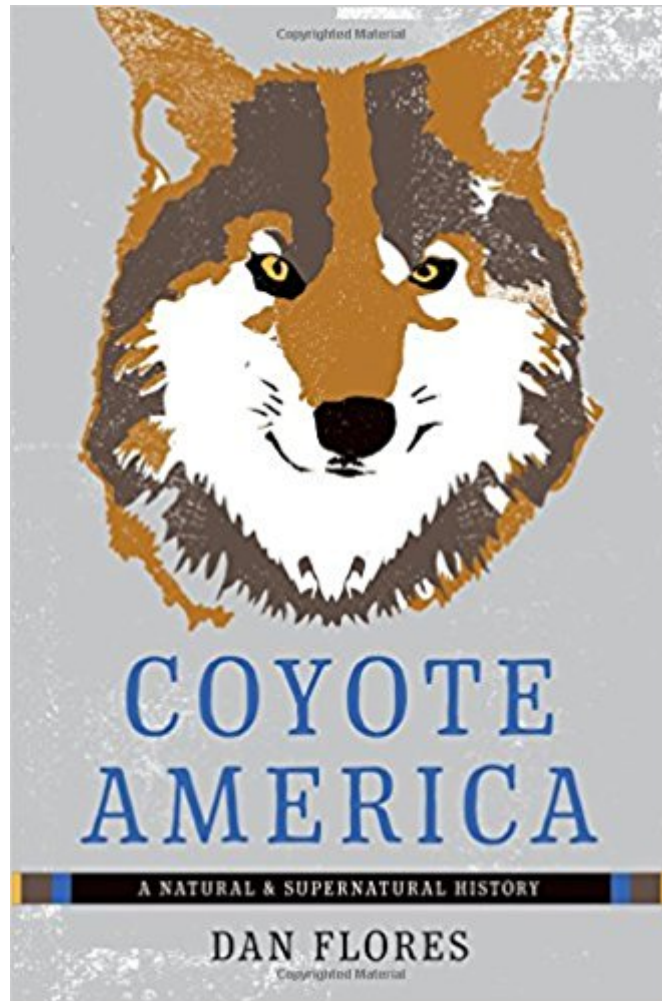


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Coyote America: A Natural And Supernatural History



Synopsis

With its uncanny night howls, unrivaled ingenuity, and amazing resilience, the coyote is the stuff of legends. In Indian folktales it often appears as a deceptive trickster or a sly genius. But legends don't come close to capturing the incredible survival story of the coyote. As soon as Americans—especially white Americans—began ranching and herding in the West, they began working to destroy the coyote. Despite campaigns of annihilation employing poisons, gases, helicopters, and engineered epidemics, coyotes didn't just survive, they thrived, expanding across the continent from Anchorage, Alaska, to New York's Central Park. In the war between humans and coyotes, coyotes have won hands-down. Coyote America is both an environmental and a deep natural history of the coyote. It traces both the five-million-year-long biological story of an animal that has become the "wolf" in our backyards, as well as its cultural evolution from a preeminent spot in Native American religions to the hapless foil of the Road Runner. A deeply American tale, the story of the coyote in the American West and beyond is a sort of Manifest Destiny in reverse, with a pioneering hero whose career holds up an uncanny mirror to the successes and failures of American expansionism. An illuminating biography of this extraordinary animal, Coyote America isn't just the story of an animal's survival—it is one of the great epics of our time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Any book by Dan Flores is worth a read. There are a number of books on coyotes, but this one is

the best overall I've read. It covers several broad themes: coyote resilience, coyote individualism, coyote biology (including a little evolution, but all the science is easily understood), coyotes and people (in the broad sense--native American tales, coyotes in the city and more), and much of the book deals with the persecution of coyotes. This last is important, and Flores discusses a century of shooting, poisoning and cruelty--still going on--that must have killed several tens of millions of them. A sorry tale it is, mostly a taxpayer subsidy of agricultural hatred of predators. Flores says that the coyote resilience is because they can function well as individuals or in groups, and can quickly adjust to the ecological possibilities of an area. This resilience evolved in part because of another kind of persecution: wolves kill coyotes and coyotes had to evolve ways to cope with that. Human eradication of wolves in most of the USA opened up opportunity for coyotes. Flores thinks coyotes are a lot like humans in being flexible and coping with stress. There's an amusing but serious point in American attitudes. People who like the animal say "ki-YOH-tee" and people who dislike the animal (and rural Westerners) say "ki-yote." There's a bit of a cultural war over coyotes, although not as severe and militant as over wolves. Flores discusses coyotes in cities, primarily Los Angeles and Chicago, although they've made it to New York and even Staten Island. They're in all states but Hawai'i. Flores discusses coyote mixing with wolf and dog populations.

COYOTE AMERICA, A Natural and Supernatural History by Dan Flores addresses the evolutionary and spiritual influence of the oldest predator of the North American continent during its more than 1500 year saga of survival to avoid extinction by humans. In a very thorough study, Flores traces the mythical history of the American icon from its spiritual image for Native Americans to its present day embodiment in the Coywolf, a coyote-wolf hybrid now found in large numbers in the north eastern provinces of Canada. Despite large scale and expensive national programs to eliminate the coyote it has survived and is presently found all over North America including a city or suburb near you. According to Flores it is these massive efforts to eradicate the coyote that triggered evolutionary forces of adaption which have allowed it to flourish and invade all parts of the continent. Coyote America is a veritable encyclopedia of all things coyote from its image as a god for Native Americans, to efforts of the federal government to eradicate the species, to the iconic image of Disney's Wile Coyote. The work includes a bibliography of about 100 books which Flores used to compile just about everything one would want to know about North America's oldest predator. Considering the present ecological consciousness, it is hard to imagine the costly efforts that humans have expended in recent history to eradicate a whole species of animals by poisoning, gunning down from airplanes or trapping. With the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973

and the influence of books such as Silent Spring we humans now realize the importance of all creatures to achieve a balance in nature between prey and predators.

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