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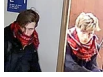
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Entertainment

# Unseen artist: Coyote Walk sheds light on urban wildlife in Saskatoon

*Jay White allows himself to be stalked. He lurks in the shadows, trying to avoid the human gaze, but a GPS app gives away his location. The Vancouver artist aims to spark a conversation about ecological issues and unseen urban spaces with his project Coyote Walk, which took place in Saskatoon from Sunday to Tuesday.*

Stephanie McKay • Saskatoon StarPhoenix

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Photos taken during Jay White's Coyote Walk in Saskatoon. Beyond a distant blur, no one has managed to capture White on camera during his walks.

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The Vancouver artist aims to spark a conversation about ecological issues and unseen urban spaces with his project Coyote Walk, which took place in Saskatoon from Sunday to Tuesday.

“There are areas, even in cities, that people don’t really visit, that are hidden in plain sight. I got really interested in the animals that live there. In a lot of cities in North America there are burgeoning, successful coyote populations. That fascinated me because they are large mammals but we don’t see them very often,” he said, mid-walk, from an urban meadow.

During these walks, he camps for three days, trying to remain hidden, often moving at night and sleeping during the day. He invites participants to track and attempt to photograph him but to respect his privacy, much like an ecologist tracks animals. Beyond a distant blur, no one has managed to capture White on camera. Participant photographs, whether they capture White or not, are a central aspect of the final work.

It is White’s first time in Saskatoon, but he’s excited to build on Coyote Walk experiences he had in Vancouver, both of which ended prematurely because it was difficult to find spaces not already inhabited by animals.

When trying to find a dark, safe space on his first Coyote Walk in Vancouver in 2013, White was corralled by people walking their dogs and returning home from work. In seeking spaces where he could avoid detection, he stumbled on actual coyotes.

“I called the project Coyote Walk because I was interested in it, but I didn’t think I was going to encounter them. It was really interesting to see how by taking on these simple parameters of hiding from humans in a city, that your concerns start to overlap with other animals.”

On the second night of the walk, he hid out near a golf course. The only safe place he could find happened to be a coyote den.

It’s important to White that he not affect the animals’ behaviour in any way, so when he does encounter wildlife, he stops the project. Protecting the wildlife takes priority over art.

“A narrative about respecting the lives of others whether they’re humans or other animals is more important as a final touch on a project than to continue on in some kind of heroic manner.”

White will talk about his experience in Saskatoon this weekend. As part of Nuit Blanche on Saturday, he will project his video *Miawe’g Lmu’j aqq Paqt’sm/Between the Dog and the Wolf*. He will also engage attendees in a discussion about urban wildlife. The video runs throughout the night at the corner of Avenue E South and 20th Street West. The discussion takes place in the same location at 9:15 p.m.

White’s week in Saskatoon is the start of an open-ended collaboration with Saskatoon curators Michael Peterson and Gary Young. He plans to develop a longer-term project that involves human and wildlife interactions in the city. A community discussion at 11 a.m. on Sunday at The Two Twenty marks a starting point for the project. Audience members are encouraged to participate. It’s important to White to include and respect the voices of those who want to collaborate, but also the voices of those who can’t contribute, including the animals themselves.

[smckay@thestarphoenix.com](mailto:smckay@thestarphoenix.com)