

THE GOLDEN LAB AND THE COYOTE

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Spring was trying to arrive, forcing out the last days of Old Man Winter by warming up the hillsides and ravines. The sun seemed extremely warm and inviting today even though the odd snow bank was still trying to make a last desperate attempt to hang on for its life. Not being able to resist an invitation to the first call of spring, my dog Sam and I prepared for a brisk walk in the nearby valley.

I packed a thermos of coffee, a book to read in the warm sun, some dog biscuits and a litre of water for the dog. These we would enjoy at the picnic tables at the half way point of our walk.

The walk began after a 10 minute drive to get out of the city. It was great, tramping through mud and dry areas and a mixture of both. We stopped often on this first glorious walk of spring to make certain that we enjoyed everything around us.

The squawk of the early arriving Canada and Snow Geese let all around them know that they were messengers of spring bringing the sun and the warm winds. In tune with the geese was the quacking of the pintail and mallard ducks attempting to set up territory. The early chokecherry buds looked tasty on the trees as well as the old rose hips still left from last year. They occasionally whispered to Sam to come on over and leave his mark as other animals that passed by had done. No place could be better than the open air in early spring.

After an enjoyable walk of five medium hills and five ever so long, tall and steep hills we finally made it to the

picnic area and fell exhausted onto benches of the picnic tables.

As quick as a wink the first cup of coffee was drunk up and Sam had water. This was our reward for our walk. The dog biscuits were quickly eaten by Sam and with the second cup of coffee came the signal that we could now sit back and relax for a while. Of course, before Sam could relax his usual sniffing of everything around us had to be done. Then as the sun diminished he came over and settled down for a quiet nap in the sun. The book that I was reading took all my cares away from my mind and still slowly settled in.

In the quietness of the easy breeze blowing in the trees and the small flowers trying to bud, we became completely enraptured in our relaxation.

I was abruptly brought around to reality by a strange grunting sound from my dog. I hollered at him for so long interrupting my solitude. He stood but out of the corner of my eye I could see him crawling on his belly. I quickly continued to read and was almost at a solution to the mystery when Sam made that same weird grunt sound again. It was a sickening sound so I had to get up to see what he was up to. No more had crawled about 50 yards from where he was and all this distance on his belly as the slide marks in the soft soil indicated. There, ahead of him, was a coyote doing the same type of crawling as what Sam did. I stopped and was in awe. There were both animals crawling towards each other making strange grunting sounds. I got frightened for myself and Sam as he got up from his

and began walking over to the
e. I was afraid for his life in case
would fight so I whistled loudly.
was a warning sound to Sam and
opped. Meanwhile the coyote
up very straight and watched.
hen came running back to me and
own. The coyote then ran about
big steps straight ahead, did a com-
somersault and ended up with its
ointing every which way. Sam sat
ying to figure out what was hap-
g. When the coyote began to
its bushy tail and walk towards us,
cared. I immediately thought that
rabies for its strange actions. In
ghtened condition I grabbed a
n off a dead caragana tree and
ed on to the picnic table. I was
red to fight. It seemed to sense a
e from curiosity to protectiveness

and it began to circle around instead of
coming straight at us. It circled us for
about 10 minutes and then headed
towards the valley top. Once at the crest
it stopped and lay down to watch us. Its
coat meanwhile glistened in the warm
sun and it blended in amongst the rocks
at the top.

Slowly, we packed up and began our
walk back. We were ever so watchful as
we hiked the long trail. To this day, I do
not know the meaning of all this activity
by that coyote. Was it a new type of
spring dance by the animals? Was it a
spring ritual or was it the coyote-dog
way to announce spring? Whatever it
was that these two animals were going
through, it sure made for an interesting
first walk in spring.



R.E. Gehlert

HYBRID DEER

The winter of 1984 - 1985 was a fairly severe winter and a deer feeding program was instituted. Having a fair number of deer around (mostly Mule Deer and some White-tailed) took part in this program. It was surprising how soon the deer knew feed was being put out for them at evening and morning chore time. As if by magic at 8:30 in the morning and 4:30 in the afternoon deer appeared out of the tree shelterbelts. Those that had gone back to the riverbreaks were coming on the run, as if they were racing to see who could get there first.

When spring weather arrived the deer spent most of their time in the riverbreaks, and much less time at the farm. In the fall of 1985 - 1986, when the first bad weather arrived, a small herd came in and were searching for food in the area that they had been fed the previous winter.

I was surprised to see that two of the Mule Deer does had White-tail fawns nursing on them. One had two and the other had one. These were soon

weaned but stayed close to mothers until spring.

The next fall, 1986 - 1987, they back again, but the mothers had Deer fawns. Two of the previous spring White-tails were bucks. They were quite independent, the doe, followed her mother and sister. The fall of 1987 - 1988 the same were around, except for one of the White-tail bucks. It had either strayed away or was taken during the hunting season. This season of 1988 the doe back again and the surviving buck is now a proud specimen and they arrived with a youngster.

I am positive that these three deer were nursing on Mule Deer does in 1985 - 1986 are White-tail and Mule Deer crosses. It is hard to believe Mule Deer would adopt other deer let alone those of another species. We have had a White-tail buck associated with the Mule Deer for several years. — *Sig Jordheim*, White Bear, Saskatchewan. SOL 3L0



Cross doe with 1988 offspring

Sig Jordheim



Mule X White-tailed Deer buck

Sig Jordheim

