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## Zimo's back! Read why a walk in the Foothills is good medicine

A coyote scurried across the grassy hillside overlooking Boise.

It spotted me right off the bat, even before I saw it.

Then it stopped when I sat down on a rock. It crouched down in some tall grass and disappeared. I could still feel its eyes on me.

My dog and I stayed still for about 5 minutes, and the coyote stayed hunkered down.

Then it apparently got nervous and started to run across the hillside, finally going over a ridge.

Boise's Foothills are such an incredible place for hiking and wildlife watching. I've learned that over the last 12 weeks as I've been recovering from surgery. I was in great shape in August, bicycling 30 to 45 miles a week, whitewater paddling at least once a week and hiking as much as possible.

Then I learned that I would need surgery. Everything happened so fast, and I was off to Seattle to meet with a surgeon.

It's kind of funny. It was at that time I really learned just how much the outdoors and hunting and fishing mean to people across the Northwest. And that we're all connected by those activities.

I learned that if I was going to have surgery in time to recover for duck and steelhead seasons, I was going to have to make a quick decision to have it done in September.

The surgeon and his assistant are active outdoors folks. It had to be scheduled by mid-September because the head surgeon had a mule deer hunt in eastern Oregon the third week in September, and his assistant had planned a steelheading adventure on the Deschutes River in Oregon.

You've got to love the outdoors connections. Even though we were discussing my condition throughout the whole process, discussions always turned to hot spots for mulies across the West and the best flies for steelies.

That's life in the West. It revolves around the outdoors.

In fact, we were discussing everything from elk hunting in the Clearwater River drainage to roaming the Lochsa and Selway country.

I haven't been paddling whitewater, doing singletrack on my mountain bike, making tele turns or rowing my drift boat since the surgery. I'm not ready to tackle those activities.

My muscles are like mush after being down for the longest period of my life.

Walking is the key to getting back in shape. Lots of it.

If there was ever a place loaded with good therapy, like exercise, scenery and fresh air, it's the Foothills.

It makes you realize what an asset we have so close to town, and saving as much of it as possible should be a priority.

Every day, I mosied along the trails, stopping to look at the rabbitbrush, taking in the pungent aroma of sagebrush, listening to chukars in the rimrock and looking at scat. Hey, if you can't mountain bike, looking at scat ain't bad.

Actually, it has been pretty interesting. I've seen lots of it.

Scat, especially coyote or fox scat, tells a lot about what the animals are eating. You'll find hair, bones and berries in scat. And you

can tell coyote scat because the tips are tapered into long tails. I got that out of "Scats and Tracks of the Rocky Mountains." Check it out.

I'm like a lot of outdoors folks who don't like to slow down, even with illness or surgery. It's difficult to handle, and sometimes you overdo it and end up on the couch snoozing at 2 in the afternoon.

Anyway, I'm still on the trail to recovery. I had a major setback with infection that put me down for another month.

But those two bald eagles I saw soaring over the rimrock above the Boise River on one of my hikes was really good medicine. It's good to be back.

Contact reporter Pete Zimowsky at [pzimowsky@idahostatesman.com](mailto:pzimowsky@idahostatesman.com) or 377-6445. Read past columns at [IdahoStatesman.com/Zimo](http://IdahoStatesman.com/Zimo).