

Coyotes



Coyotes were originally found mostly in open country— plains and deserts. Since the beginning of the 20th century, they have dramatically increased their range. This may be due to the removal of wolves— a natural enemy of the coyote, and an increased food supply due to livestock and perhaps road kill.

The name *coyote* comes from the original Aztec name *coyoti*. The coyote can lope along at 40 kph, and can reach speeds of nearly 70 kph.

Description:

The coyote *Canis latrans* is one of the seven representatives of the Canidae family found in Canada. Other members of the family are the wolf, red fox, grey fox, swift fox, and dog.

The coyote is smaller than a wolf, with the male coyote weighing between 9 to 23 kg (20 to 50 lbs.) The female is usually smaller.

Coyotes are monogamous, and couples may remain together for several years. Both sexes can breed at one year of age under good conditions, although both sexes usually breed somewhat later in life. During the mating season, males solicit the females' favours. The mating takes place mainly during February and March; gestation, or pregnancy, lasts from 60 to 63 days.

The coyote prefers to den on the banks of a stream or the slopes of a gorge and usually chooses a concealed spot. It often enlarges an abandoned marmot or badger burrow. The female may prepare alternative lodgings to enable her family to move to another refuge should trouble occur.

Why killing will not work...



Predation by coyotes is still a serious problem for livestock producers. Most people, however, realize that the coyote is not the menace that it was once thought to be. The use of poison is now controlled by law. Bounties, or rewards, generally shown to be ineffective, are rare. If coyote numbers decrease, and food is plentiful, they will have larger litters.

Predator control is aimed at specific local problems. However, much of the research done on the coyote is still aimed at reducing predation on sheep.

Respect for coyotes is required in urban areas, where they are increasingly at home. Pets are often targeted by coyotes. A female coyote may try to lure a dog from a yard, where other coyotes are waiting to help kill it.

Although it sometimes causes problems, the coyote has its rightful place in the animal kingdom. More and more people, including farmers, appreciate its value as a scavenger and a predator of rodents.

What to do when....

I've found a young coyote!



Both parents look after the pups. Even if one parent is killed, the other will feed and care for the young. **Do not remove a pup unless there is clear evidence that both parents are dead.**

Coyotes may suffer from diseases such as distemper, canine hepatitis, rabies, and parvo virus. *They should only be handled by trained wildlife rehabilitators or conservation officers.*

Both parents look after the pups. Even if one parent is killed, the other will feed and care for the young. **Do not remove a pup unless there is clear evidence that both parents are dead.**

Coyotes may suffer from diseases such as distemper, canine hepatitis, rabies, and parvo virus. *They should only be handled by trained wildlife rehabilitators or conservation officers.*

Parasites and diseases can sometimes lead to death. Common are outbreaks of sarcoptic mange, an infestation by microscopic mites that causes thickening of the skin, loss of hair, and itching. Heartworm and hookworm are other common parasites of coyotes.

Although primarily a flesh-eater, the coyote will eat just about anything available. Rabbits and hares are typically dietary staples, as are small rodents. Blueberries and other wild fruits are commonly eaten, in quantity, in summer and fall. Coyotes also eat insects, such as grasshoppers, when they become available.

Resources:

Andelt, W.F. 1987. Coyote predation. In M. Novak, J.A. Baker, M.E. Obbard, and B. Mallock, editors. Wild furbearer management and conservation in North America. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Toronto.

Bekoff, M.L., editor. 1978. Coyotes: biology, behavior, and management. Academic Press, New York.

Carbyn, L.N. 1989. Cases of coyote attacks on children in western North America. Wildlife Society Bulletin. 17(4).

Ryden, H. 1979. God's dog: a celebration of the North American coyote. Penguin Books Canada Ltd., Markham, Ontario.

Voigt, D.R., and W.E. Berg. 1987. Coyotes. In M. Novak, J.A. Baker, M.E. Obbard, and B. Mallock, editors. Wild furbearer management and conservation in North America. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Toronto