



Coyote – *Canis latrans*



COLOR

Dark gray to pale gray to reddish-brown

LENGTH

Average 37" long, 18" high

WEIGHT

From 20 to 50 pounds
-Coyotes in the NE US
tend to be larger due to
interbreeding with wolves



Physical Description



MALES VS. FEMALES

Males are larger than females

TAIL

Bushy, tails hang lower than
dogs or foxes when running

Coyote Habitat

Coyotes can be found in all habitat types across North and Central America (except the far northern tundra) including heavily urbanized areas.

They are most often associated with open prairie habitats and agriculture in the west and brushy areas in the east, but are also found in desert and mountain areas

Coyotes are often found in areas with abundant rodent and rabbit populations.



Behavior and Longevity

- May be active any time of day, but mostly at dawn and dusk

- Highly intelligent, normally wary

- Can run at speeds close to 40mph



- Coyotes live about 3-8 years in the wild; up to 18 years in captivity. Sources of mortality for non-hunted populations include vehicle collisions, starvation, and diseases like mange, parvo virus or canine distemper

Reproduction

Breeding System –
Monogamous

Season – January through
March

Gestation - 63 days

Number of pups - 3 to 15,
average 6

Weaning - Weaned in about 6
weeks

Dispersal – Pups disperse at 6 -
9 months, some not until 2nd
year, up to 100 miles

Compensatory Breeding – may
have more pups per litter if the
population is suppressed



Denning

Coyotes den in a variety of places to provide shelter for the pups:

- brush covered slopes
- steep banks
- rock ledges
- thickets
- hollow logs



They may also dig their own burrows or use abandoned dens of other animals

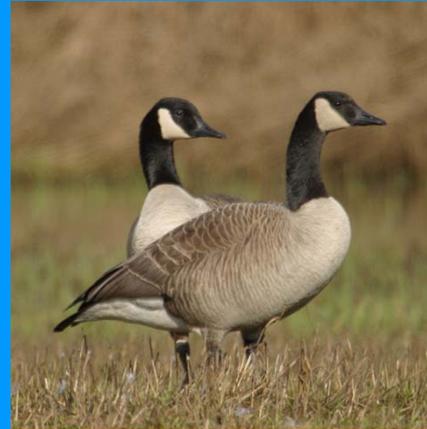
Females prepare the den, while males assist in raising the young and provide much of the food for the family

Dens are not typically used unless there are dependent young

Multiple dens may be used in a given year, and dens may be re-used in subsequent years



Diet and Feeding Habits



They are **highly opportunistic** and will adapt their diet to whatever food is available

Coyote Scat



Role of Coyotes in the Ecosystem

- Regulate smaller predators (foxes, raccoons, skunks, feral cats, etc) by direct killing and competitive exclusion
- This may indirectly increase diversity and abundance of songbirds and waterfowl



Social Behavior

- Home range size of 2-55 square miles
- May travel alone, in pairs, or small groups
- Where small mammals provide an abundant prey source, coyotes tend to be more solitary
- Where larger animals are more available, coyotes tend to group up to aid hunting – range from 2-10 adults plus pups
- Also solitary coyotes that have left groups and are looking for territories



Social Dynamics

- In populations that are less influenced by humans (eg. Yellowstone Nat. Park), groups appear to be more common

- Led by Alpha male and female, who control and maintain group territory and are often the only breeders

- Subordinates adults are called Betas, and may help rear pups



- In more disturbed populations, groups tend to be less prominent and/or more loosely organized, thus more females (not just the Alpha) will breed and populations may increase

Coyote Vocalization



Expansion of Range

PRE-1850: Primarily grasslands and prairies of Central US, SW Canada and North-Central Mexico

With the arrival of settlers, coyotes were attracted to deforested areas (created for mining and agriculture), and human-food sources (garbage, livestock)

One of the coyote's main competitors, the Gray Wolf, was locally exterminated in many areas allowing coyotes to move eastward

Coyote Distribution in North America



Source: Cook County, Illinois, Coyote Project

Conflict History

Up until the mid-1900s, coyotes (along with other Predators such as bears, lions and wolves) were primarily considered a threat to livestock, a danger to humans, and competition for game species

The goal of the US Dept. of Ag. was total extermination



In an extermination effort from 1915 to 1947, bounties were paid on almost 2 million coyotes in the U.S.

Coyotes have thrived, and still do today, despite widespread attempts to control or eradicate them because of their alleged attacks on livestock.



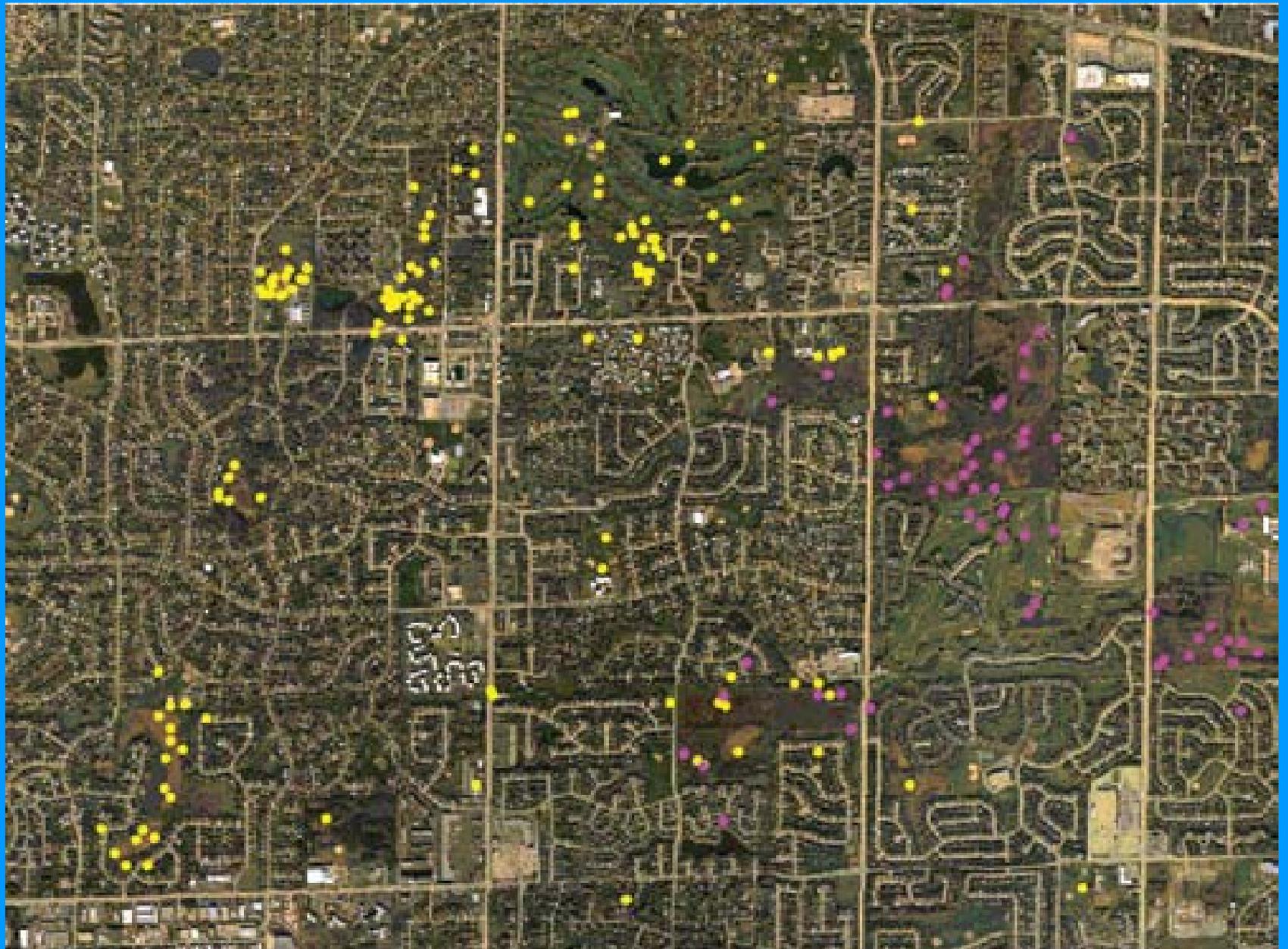
Wildlife Services, a branch of the USDA, still controls Coyotes to address conflicts with livestock. Non-lethal methods (fencing, guard dogs and donkeys, better animal care practices) are also encouraged



Attempts to eradicate coyotes have failed, and may have resulted in the survival of the fittest – the most adaptable, intelligent and resilient individuals will breed

Urban Coyotes

- Human encroachment into coyote habitat
- There is an abundance of food in urban environments
- The landscape is full of “edges”, which benefit coyotes
- Less habitat is needed as food and shelter are plentiful, therefore coyotes can live at higher densities
- Instead of direct control efforts, coyotes are most at risk from vehicle collisions and disease
- It's important to remember that coyotes live among us every day, and rarely are there conflicts



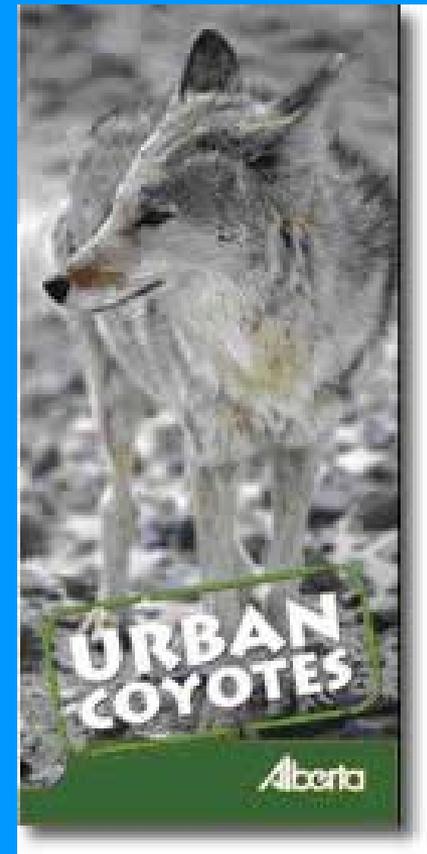
Use of downtown habitat by 2 females in Chicago, Illinois

The success of the coyote is attributed to the decline in wolves and their amazing ability to adapt to a changing environment

Wildlife managers have found that eradication attempts actually expand coyote populations, rather than reduce or eliminate them.

Coyotes often live in close proximity to people

When coyotes do not have negative experiences around people (eg. They are not hunted or trapped or hazed) they may be less timid and more frequently seen in the day.



Do NOT feed coyotes!!!!

(Either intentionally or unintentionally)

Coyotes quickly learn that humans provide easy sources of food and may become bold or even aggressive.

Pets may be at risk, especially free-roaming cats or smaller dogs that are left unattended in backyards with fences lower than 6 ft.

Unsecured pet food or garbage will also attract coyotes.

Local golfers had been observed throwing food to coyotes. Because of this sort of behavior, other residents were being followed down the street by habituated coyotes that are looking for a handout.

If you feed coyotes, you are affecting not only yourself, but also your neighbors. This needs to be a community effort.



While injuries to humans from coyotes are extremely rare, there have been cases where coyotes have bitten people.

Also, luring or feeding coyotes is illegal in Colorado, and may result in a \$68 fine.



We need to work together to reduce attractants and teach coyotes to be wild again.

Tips for Living in Coyote Country:

1. **Supervise Children** - Teach them how to recognize a coyote and what to do if they encounter one.
2. **Protect your pets** - Coyotes will attack and kill cats and smaller dogs. Do not allow your pets to roam and protect them with at least a 6 ft fence or an enclosed kennel. Don't leave pets unattended.



3. Do not allow your dogs to “play” with coyotes. Coyotes may get aggressive when defending their territory.
4. Don't leave pet food out and feed birds responsibly – These food sources attract both coyotes and other small mammals that coyotes prey upon.
5. Watch the time – coyotes can be active at any time of day but particularly at dawn, dusk and overnight.
6. Keep your garbage secured
7. Protect livestock – Especially chickens, young calves and sheep.
8. Keep hazing tools nearby



What To Do If You Meet a Coyote:

1. Keep your distance and do not approach them. Coyotes can provide a great wildlife viewing opportunity if you keep your distance and use common sense.



2. Keep pets on a 6 foot leash when walking them.

3. If a coyote approaches you or your pet, try using a loud, authoritative voice to make it uncomfortable.

4. You can also use an air horn, pepper spray, yell, throw rocks or sticks— do anything you can to frighten it away.

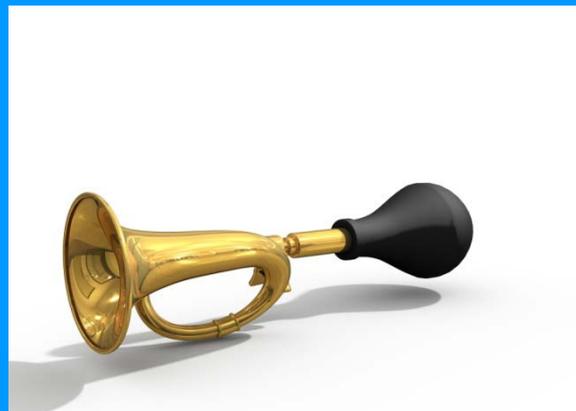
Colorado Wildlife Laws

Coyotes are currently managed as both a small game species and a furbearer species in Colorado.

Landowners or agents can control coyotes on their own property without a license if they are threatening life, livestock or property (this includes pets)

Rubber buckshot is a great hazing tool, but people that live in areas with firearms restrictions have fewer options than those in rural areas.

Other non-lethal hazing is the best thing to do in these areas.



In Summary:

Coyotes are smart, adaptable, and have found good sources of food and shelter in urban areas

Coyotes that associate humans and pets with food may become habituated: Too often they are rewarded and get no negative feedback for behaving in this way

Your goal (and that of the community) should be to make coyotes feel uncomfortable around humans and pets

Pets and children should still be protected to a degree you are comfortable with