



Be coyote aware.

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Remove attractants:

A fed coyote is a dead coyote.



Michael Francis



Joe Crnkowski

Coexisting with Coyotes



PROJECT COYOTE
PROTECTING WILD CARNIVORES
FOSTERING THRIVING ECOSYSTEMS

Join our pack! Your donation to Project Coyote directly supports our work to protect wild carnivores and foster thriving ecosystems.



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PROJECT COYOTE

P.O. Box 5007, Larkspur, CA 94977

COYOTE ENCOUNTERS

Coyotes are one of our most common wild neighbors in North America. While they are generally reclusive and avoid humans, seeing coyotes at any time of day is not a cause for concern. However, the very traits that have allowed coyotes to thrive, adapt, and coexist with people, even in highly populated regions, have also led to occasional conflicts with humans and our domestic animals. The abundance of attractants such as food, water, and shelter offered by urban landscapes—coupled with unsecured garbage, unfenced gardens, and unattended domestic animals—can lead to an increase in coyote presence and potential conflicts.

Most coyotes naturally fear people, but can become habituated to our presence when they are rewarded for engaging with humans and the attractants our communities offer. Documented cases of coyotes injuring people are very rare and most often related to people intentionally or unintentionally feeding them, being with a dog, or disturbing them during their pupping season when they're raising and protecting their pups (April-August). If you encounter a coyote, remember the following:

- Appreciate coyotes from a distance and avoid feeding or approaching them.
- Keep dogs on leashes and pick up small dogs if a coyote is near.
- If approached by a coyote, you can reinforce their natural fear of humans by facing them and being BIG and LOUD (i.e. wave your arms, shout). If possible, blow a whistle, pop open an umbrella or large plastic bag, or throw objects toward (but not at) the coyote.
- Leave the area by calmly walking, never running, away from the coyote.

COYOTE (MIS)MANAGEMENT

Historically, our society has attempted to “solve” human-coyote conflicts by killing coyotes. However, despite decades of poisoning, trapping, and shooting, coyote populations are thriving. Why? The remarkable success of coyotes appears to be closely related to human attempts to control their population size. As with many wild species, coyote populations are naturally regulated by available food, habitat, and territorial defense by resident family groups. Lethal control, however, can disrupt coyote families, encouraging more individuals to reproduce at younger ages. This can result in larger litter sizes because of decreased competition for food and habitat, and increasing pup survival rates.

At least half a million coyotes are killed each year in the U.S.—one per minute—by federal, state, and local governments and by private individuals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s “Wildlife Services” program kills approximately 70,000 coyotes each year. Most of this killing is carried out in the name of “livestock protection” and is a taxpayer subsidy for agribusiness and ranchers.

Despite scientific evidence suggesting this approach is misguided and ultimately ineffective, an emphasis on lethal coyote control persists. Coyotes are also killed for their fur, for “sport,” for “fun,” and in “body-count” contests where prizes are awarded for killing the most coyotes. Most states set no limit on the number of coyotes that may be killed, nor do they regulate the killing methods. Killing to reduce coyote populations or relocating individual coyotes is not recommended. Relocating coyotes involved in conflicts is often harmful and counterproductive to conflict mitigation (and illegal in many states).



EDUCATED COEXISTENCE

Urban landscapes offer an abundance of coyote attractants, including food, water, and shelter. Ensuring that coyotes have access to adequate natural habitat, along with removing or securing attractants from residences, may decrease conflicts. Take the following steps to prevent coyotes from being attracted to your community.

- Wildlife-proof garbage in sturdy containers with tight fitting lids.
- Don't leave pet food outside.
- Take out trash on the morning pickup is scheduled.
- Keep compost in secure containers.
- Keep fallen fruit off the ground.
- Keep bird seed off the ground; seeds attract rodents, which attract coyotes. Remove feeders if coyotes are seen in your yard.
- Keep barbecue grills clean.
- Eliminate accessible water sources.
- Clear away brush and dense weeds near buildings.
- Close off crawl spaces under decks and around buildings where coyotes may den. If you frequently see a coyote in your yard, make loud noises with pots, pans, or air horns.
- Install motion-activated lights.
- Share this list with your neighbors; coexistence is a neighborhood effort.

APPROXIMATELY ONE COYOTE IS KILLED EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY DAY.

HELP STOP THE KILLING BY PRACTICING COMPASSIONATE COEXISTENCE AND SUPPORTING PROJECT COYOTE.

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COYOTES IN COMPARISON TO COMPANION ANIMALS & FOXES

- Coyotes have distinctive, black-tipped bushy tails.
- Labrador Retrievers are twice the weight of a coyote.
- The average fox is much smaller than a coyote.
- Domestic cats can appear as prey.



COYOTE ECOLOGY

Two hundred years of costly persecution has not eliminated the resilient coyote from our landscape. In fact, coyotes have expanded their range two to threefold since the 1850s, largely in response to human changes to the environment and the eradication of wolves. Coyotes live in a range of habitats in North and Central America, from California to Newfoundland and Alaska to Panama. Coyotes have adapted to living close to people and now inhabit even the most densely populated metropolitan cities, including Boston, San Francisco, Austin, and Seattle. An estimated 2,000 coyotes are on self-appointed “rat patrol” in the Chicago metropolitan area.

Coyotes play an important ecological role helping to maintain healthy ecosystems and species diversity. As the top carnivore in some ecosystems, coyotes help regulate the number of mesocarnivores (such as skunks, raccoons, and foxes), which boosts bird diversity and abundance. Western coyotes typically weigh 18-30 pounds and look similar to a small shepherd or collie-type dog but with pointed, erect ears. Coyotes have a long, bushy, black-tipped tail that is usually carried pointed down. Their eastern counterparts may be larger, averaging 30-40 pounds (reflecting historical interbreeding with wolves and sometimes domestic dogs). Coyotes are usually grayish brown with reddish tinges behind the ears and around the face, but coloration can vary from silver-gray to black.



Coyotes often mate for life.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION & LIFE HISTORY

Coyotes exhibit complex social structures, and may live as solitary individuals, in pairs, or in small family groups. Coyotes are generally monogamous; pairs often stay together for many years, and some for life. This behavior is evidence of their rich internal lives: they form strong bonds with their partners and raise their pups together through cooperation. Urban coyotes are especially known for high rates of monogamy, showing 100% dedication (pair-bonding) to their partners in some areas. Both male and female coyotes actively maintain territories that can vary in size from 2 to 30 square miles.

Female coyotes come into heat once a year and breeding is generally limited to one pair in a family group. Breeding season peaks in mid February, followed by a roughly 63 day gestation period. Coyote mothers typically have 3-7 offspring. Pup mortality is high—an average of 50-75% die within their first year. Some juveniles disperse in late fall to seek new territory and mates, while others remain in their parents’ social group.

COYOTE LIFE CYCLE

Dec—Feb	Mating/Breeding Activity
Feb—Apr	Den Site Selection and Gestation
Apr—May	Birthing and Weaning
May—Aug	Raising Pups
Sep—Nov	Pup Dispersal

DISEASE CONCERNS

Rabies is extremely rare in coyotes, and do not commonly transmit the disease to humans or domestic animals.

Coyotes provide natural rodent control.

FOOD

Coyotes eat a wide variety of food, and like most animals, prefer food that is easiest to obtain. They are true omnivores, and their diet may consist of rodents, rabbits, insects, lizards, birds, vegetables, and fruits. They will also take advantage of unsecured garbage and pet food left outdoors. As scavengers, they provide an ecological service by helping keep our communities clean of carrion (i.e. roadkill). In suburbia, coyotes have been known to occasionally take smaller companion animals if left unprotected. Animal guardians are advised to keep cats indoors, and dogs on leash or under reliable voice control during the day and indoors at night.

HABITS & BEHAVIOR

In rural habitats, coyotes hunt by day and night. In urban areas, coyotes appear to be more nocturnal but can often be seen during daylight hours, especially at dawn and dusk. They communicate by vocalizing, scent marking and through a variety of body displays. It is common to hear them howling and yipping at night, or even during the day, in response to sirens and other loud noises.

The coyote’s scientific name, *Canis latrans* (meaning “barking dog”), reflects their use of around a dozen vocalizations. It’s common to mistake a few communicating coyotes for a large group due to their variety of sounds and pitches. Coyotes are fast and agile; some researchers report coyotes jumping over 8 foot fences. Coyotes are highly intelligent and social animals; they learn quickly and are devoted parents. Intelligence and sociability are integral to their well-being, behavioral flexibility, and—through those physiological traits—to their ecological role.



Don't let domestic animals roam.

Jouko van der Kruijssen

KEEPING DOMESTIC ANIMALS SAFE

Although free roaming domestic animals are more likely to be killed by automobiles than wildlife, small, unsupervised cats and dogs may be at risk of predation, even inside private yards. Coyotes may also occasionally perceive domestic dogs as competitors or threats, leading to rare attacks in urban areas. Other domestic animals including sheep, chickens and rabbits, may also be seen as prey and should be protected to prevent conflict. Consider the following coexistence strategies:

- 🐾 Don't leave any food outside; keep all food well secured.
- 🐾 Always walk dogs on leashes, especially during coyote mating and pupping seasons (see coyote life cycle chart).
- 🐾 Spay or neuter your dogs. Though uncommon, coyotes are attracted to, and can mate with, dogs.
- 🐾 Don't let domestic animals roam; keep them securely enclosed and protected at night and protect farm animals in predator-proof enclosures/pens. Install motion-sensor lights near buildings.
- 🐾 Consider installing protective fencing around domestic animal enclosures or adding livestock guardian animals to your property. Visit our website for more information and resources.

Project Coyote protects wild carnivores and promotes compassionate coexistence through education, science, advocacy, and coalition building. We fundamentally shift the way coyotes, wolves, bears, bobcats, and other wild carnivores are viewed and treated to create a North America where humans and wild carnivores coexist and ecosystems thrive. Project Coyote's interdisciplinary programs and campaigns focus on three core areas: Protect, Coexist, and Inspire. We PROTECT wild carnivores through advocacy campaigns, teach communities to compassionately COEXIST with their wild neighbors through educational initiatives, and INSPIRE appreciation for wild nature through partnerships with educators and creatives.



Wild carnivores are an essential component of our rural and urban communities. We believe that public outreach and education are at the core of replacing fear and ignorance with understanding and appreciation for wild carnivores. Project Coyote offers a variety of educational outreach programs and resources; contact us at info@projectcoyote.org or visit our website at ProjectCoyote.org to learn more, join our e-team, or become a member of our growing community of educated and empowered citizens. All donations are tax-deductible (see reverse form).



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