



Coexisting with COYOTES

Photo: John Harrison/ProjectCoyote.org



Photo: Michael Francis



Photo: John Harrison/ProjectCoyote.org

Killing to reduce coyote populations or relocating individual coyotes is not recommended. Disruption of family groups can cause more coyotes to be born or increase pup survival rates; orphaned juveniles may act unpredictably and other coyotes will simply move into vacant areas.

Educated Coexistence

Urban landscapes offer an abundance of food, water, and shelter for coyotes. Take the following steps to prevent coyotes from being attracted to your home.

- Wildlife-proof garbage in sturdy containers with tight fitting lids.
- Don't leave pet food outside.
- Take out trash the morning pick up is scheduled.
- Keep compost in secure containers.
- Keep fallen fruit off the ground. Coyotes eat fruit.
- Keep birdseed off the ground; seeds attract rodents which then 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, and haze the coyote with a water hose.
- Share this list with your neighbors; coexistence is a neighborhood effort.

Help keep coyotes wild.

Look around - what unnatural food sources may you be offering wildlife? *A fed coyote is a dead coyote.*

Coyote Management

Historically, our society has attempted to solve human-coyote conflicts through killing. However, despite decades of poisoning, trapping, and shooting coyotes, there are more coyotes in North America today. Why?

The coyote's remarkable success appears to be closely related to human attempts to control their populations. As with many wild species, coyote populations are naturally regulated by available food and habitat. Lethal control, however, can disrupt the group hierarchy, allowing more coyotes to reproduce, encouraging larger litter sizes because of decreased competition for food and habitat, and increasing pup survival rates. It is also highly likely that lethal control favors the survival of the most resilient and genetically robust coyotes.

At least half a million coyotes are killed each year—one per minute—by federal, state and local governments and by private individuals in North America. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services program kills approximately 90,000 coyotes each year. Most of this killing is carried out in the name of "livestock protection" and is a taxpayer subsidy for agribusiness/ranchers.

Approximately one coyote is killed every minute of every day.

Despite scientific evidence suggesting this approach is misguided and ultimately ineffective, the emphasis on lethal coyote control persists. Coyotes are also killed for their fur, for "sport," 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.



Photo: John Harrison/ProjectCoyote.org

Coyote Encounters

Coyotes are usually wary of people and will avoid us whenever possible. Bold behavior is unusual and is most often a result of habituation due to intentional or unintentional feeding, the presence of a dog, or the coyote defending a den and young. If you encounter a coyote, remember the following:

- Never feed or try to "tame" a coyote; appreciate coyotes from a distance.
- Walk dogs on leashes; pick up small dogs if a coyote is near.
- If approached, be BIG and LOUD. You can also scare the animal by blowing a whistle, shaking a can with coins inside, popping open an umbrella, or throwing objects (toward but not at the coyote). Do not run from a coyote; calmly leave the area.

Coexistence is an active neighborhood effort.

If you frequently see a coyote near your home, one or more neighbors may be unknowingly providing food or shelter. Help your neighborhood by sharing this brochure and by downloading the Coyote News fact sheet available free from www.ProjectCoyote.org/resources

Coyote Conflicts

The very traits that have allowed coyotes to thrive, adapt, and coexist with people even in the most populated regions of North America have also led to conflicts with us and our domestic animals. Most coyotes fear people. However, those who associate people with food may become habituated to our presence. The abundance of food, water, and shelter offered by urban landscapes—coupled with unsecured garbage, unfenced gardens, and unattended domestic animals—can lead to conflicts. Documented cases of coyotes injuring people are very rare and most often related to people intentionally or unintentionally feeding them. Coyotes become more active, vocal, and territorial during mating and pupping seasons (see chart reverse). Pay particular attention to your companion animals' safety during these times and do not let them roam.

✂ Become a partner in ACTION! Your donation to Project Coyote directly supports our efforts on behalf of coyotes. Please join us today! (You can also make a secure online donation on our website: www.ProjectCoyote.org). ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

YES! I want to support Project Coyote. I've filled out the requested information below and enclosed my \$ _____ gift to: **Project Coyote, P.O. Box 5007, Larkspur, CA 94977**

I prefer to charge my: VISA MasterCard American Express Discover

NAME ON CREDIT CARD (please print): _____ SECURITY CODE: _____ EXPIRATION DATE: _____

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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 have adapted to living close to people and now inhabit even the most densely populated metropolitan cities from Boston to San Francisco, Austin, and Seattle. Estimates are that 2,000 coyotes are on self-appointed “rat patrol” in the Chicago metropolitan area.

At least 19 subspecies of coyote roam North and Central America, from California to Newfoundland and Alaska to Panama, occupying a broad range of habitats. 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 helps to boost biodiversity.



Photo: John Harrison/ProjectCoyote.org

Western coyotes typically weigh 18 to 30 pounds and look similar to a small Shepherd or collie-type dog but have longer, denser fur and pointed, erect ears. Coyotes have a long, bushy, black-tipped tail that is usually carried pointed down. Their eastern counterparts may be larger, averaging 35-55 pounds, which is believed to be a result of interbreeding with wolves 50-70 years ago. Coyotes are usually grayish brown with reddish tinges behind the ears and around the face, but coloration can vary from silver-gray to black.



Photo: Trish Carney, trishcarney.com

Life history: Coyotes may live as solitary individuals, in pairs, or in small family groups, both in rural and urban areas. Coyotes are generally monogamous, with pair bonds frequently lasting for many years, and some for life. Both male and female coyotes actively maintain territories that may vary in size from 2 to 30 square miles. Reproduction is generally once per year and limited to the group’s leaders, while other females remain behaviorally sterile. Breeding season peaks in mid February, followed by 4-8 pups born in a den in April or May. Pup mortality is high, with an average of 50-70% dying within their first year. Some juveniles disperse in late fall to seek new territory, and some individuals remain with their parents and form the basis of the pack.

If coyotes are left to self-regulate, generally one litter of pups per year are born with 30-50% of pups surviving.

Coyote Life Cycle

Dec-Jan-Feb	Breeding Activity
Feb-March-April	Den Site Selection
Apr-May	Birthing
May-June-July	Raising Pups
July-Aug-Sept-Oct	Expanding home range
Oct to Dec	Dispersal of pups

Cover photo: Jim Robertson

Food: Coyotes eat a wide variety of food, and like most animals, prefer food that is easiest to obtain. They are true omnivores, and will eat a wide variety of foods, including rodents, rabbits, insects, lizards, snakes, 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 to keep our communities clean of carrion. In suburbia, coyotes have been known to take smaller pets if left unprotected. Animal guardians are advised to keep cats indoors, and dogs under control during the day and indoors at night.



Photo: John Harrison/ProjectCoyote.org

Habits: 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. Indeed, the coyote’s scientific name is *Canis latrans* which means “barking dog.” With approximately a dozen different vocalizations, it is common to mistake a few coyotes communicating with each other for a large group. Coyotes are fast and agile; they can run at speeds of 25-40 mph (65 km/h) and jump 6 feet. Coyotes are also highly intelligent and social animals; they learn quickly and are devoted parents.

Rabies is rare and coyotes are not commonly implicated in the transmission of the disease to humans or domestic animals.

Keeping Domestic Animals Safe

Although free roaming pets are more likely to be killed by automobiles than by wild animals, coyotes may view cats and small dogs as potential prey and larger dogs as competition. Other domestic animals including sheep, chickens and rabbits may also be seen as food and must be protected. Consider the following:

- Don’t let domestic animals roam; keep them securely enclosed and protected at night.
- Fence your property. The fence must be at least 6 feet tall with the bottom extending at least 6 inches below the ground. Fences are more effective by using wire mesh, outwardly inverting the top of the fence, by using electric fencing along the top and bottom (more strands for protecting livestock), or by installing the CoyoteRoller™ which makes it difficult for predators to gain the “foothold” they need to pull up and over the top of an enclosure (see: www.coyoteroller.com).
- Llamas, donkeys, and livestock guard dogs are effective in reducing coyote-livestock conflicts.
- Don’t leave animal foods outside; keep all food well secured.
- Install motion-sensor lights near buildings.
- Walk dogs on leashes, particularly during coyote mating and pupping seasons (see chart).
- Spay or neuter your dogs. Though uncommon, coyotes are attracted to, and can mate with, dogs.

Livestock guard animals can effectively reduce or eliminate coyote conflicts on farms and ranches.



Photos: Brooke Oland, Camilla Fox, “White Llama” by Tambako, creative common license 2.0

About Project Coyote

Project Coyote is a North American coalition of wildlife scientists and educators promoting active coexistence between people and wildlife, and compassionate conservation through education, science, and advocacy. We champion progressive management policies that reduce human-coyote conflict, support and contribute to innovative scientific research, and help foster respect for and understanding of North America’s native “Song Dog”.

Coyotes are a healthy component of our rural and urban communities. By helping to shift attitudes toward coyotes and other native carnivores, we help replace fear and ignorance with empowerment and appreciation. Project Coyote offers a variety of educational outreach programs; contact us at info@projectcoyote.org or visit our website at ProjectCoyote.org. **Please join our growing community of educated citizens by becoming a member. All donations are tax-deductible** (see reverse form).

[Project Coyote is a sponsored project of Earth Island Institute, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that supports solutions to protect our shared planet. Project Coyote will not share your personal information with any outside organization.]

