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## EASTERN COYOTE FACT SHEET

### What is a Coyote?

The coyote, *Canis latrans*, is a widely distributed, dog-like carnivore that can be found in virtually all of North and Central America. Originally a prairie animal, their range has spread eastward in the last half-century resulting in the larger eastern coyote subspecies.

### How Do I Know if I See a Coyote?

Coyotes are easily confused with medium-sized, long-haired domestic or feral dogs. They most closely resemble a small German shepherd. They stand about 2 feet tall and weigh between 20 and 50 pounds. Coyotes run with their tail held down rather than parallel with the ground or high over the back as dogs usually do. Field markings include a long, pointed snout, erect pointed ears, and a round, fluffy tail. Most will show a thin, but obvious dark line running down the front leg to the foot. The long hairs on the back are tipped with black and create a dark band across the back that extends to the tail, the tip of which is black. Color variations range from tan to reddish to dark brown/black.



(Image from: <http://www.leerentz.com/wildcoy2.html>)



(Image from: <http://pharaohs.addr.com/mammals.htm>)

### How Long Have Coyotes Been in Ohio?

Although coyotes have been in Ohio for more than 60 years, their numbers have grown as they have adapted easily to urban environments. The first confirmed coyote specimen in Ohio was taken from Preble County in 1947. The first confirmed coyote in Cuyahoga County appears to be in 1983, when one was killed on I-77, near Harvard Road.

### Where Do Coyotes Live?

Coyotes are found in a wide variety of habitats, including grasslands, brush and forests. Adult coyotes normally excavate one or more dens in the soil, sometimes by expanding the burrows of other animals. They usually choose sites where human activity is minimal. However, their presence in urban and suburban environments is increasing, and substantial populations even exist in the Greater Cleveland suburbs. They are considered to be one of the most adaptable carnivores, tolerating human presence. In urban environments, their dens can be storm drains, culverts, under storage sheds, in holes dug in vacant lots and parks, or just about any dark, dry place.

### Are There Many Coyotes? When Do They Hunt? How Long Do They Live?

Coyotes are most active in evening and at night, but can be seen at all hours. They are often observed alone but may hunt in pairs or small family groups throughout the year. Each pair or family group may range over several square miles. Family groups are established in many local neighborhoods and in all counties of Ohio. They are not pack animals, but do function in family groups comprised of the two breeding adults, juveniles, and newborn pups. They may live as long as 10 years in the wild, though probably 5 to 6 years is more common. More than 50% of all coyote mortality in urban areas results from road kill.

### **What Do They Eat?**

Coyotes are considered to be one of the most adaptable carnivores to tolerating human presence. Coyote diets are made up of mammals, mostly small mice and other rodents, rabbits, raccoons, ground nesting waterfowl/songbirds and their eggs, carrion, reptiles and amphibians, and berries and fruits. Coyotes will also eat deer that have been killed by cars and have been observed tracking and in some cases, taking down smaller deer. As will other wild animals, coyotes will eat dog and cat food left outdoors, and they will take advantage of wildlife attracted to bird feeders.

### **What is the Role of the Coyote in Greater Cleveland?**

Coyotes have become a normal part of wildlife populations of the Greater Cleveland area as well as the suburban landscape throughout Cuyahoga County over the past two decades. Urban coyote studies (see <http://researchnews.osu.edu/archive/urbcoyot.htm>) indicate that these animals are well adapted to even intensively developed areas. Coyotes are a natural control that helps keep small mammal populations in check. Their life habits and predatory nature help control growing populations of raccoons, feral cats, feral dogs, and Canada geese that damage natural resources. Today, the coyote is the largest mammal to function as a predator in this region.

### **What Can I do To Keep Coyotes from Becoming a Nuisance?**

Coyotes, as well as other wildlife such as raccoons and deer, learn quickly and can become dependant upon humans feeding them either intentionally or unintentionally. This is especially true of young coyotes when they are being taught to fend for themselves. If food is deliberately or inadvertently provided by people, the young coyotes quickly learn not to fear humans and will develop a dependency on these easy food sources. Allowing any wild animal access to human food and garbage can aggravate human/wildlife conflicts. Don't feed wildlife. Secure lids on your garbage cans, don't leave pet food out overnight, and be aware of the potential for attracting unwanted wildlife to bird feeders. Remove brush piles and other large debris from your backyard to reduce hiding cover.

### **What Should I Do if I Encounter a Coyote?**

Generally, coyotes avoid people and will quickly move away. If a coyote approaches you directly, appears to be intentionally entering your line of travel, or begins to follow you, DO NOT turn and run/walk away with your back to the animal. This may trigger a predatory/aggressive response. Try to frighten it away by shouting in a deep voice, waving your arms, throwing objects at the animal, and looking directly in its eyes. Stand up if you are seated. If you are wearing a coat or vest, spread it open like a cape so that you appear larger. Carrying a whistle with you can aid in frightening a coyote and summoning others to assist you. Walk slowly backward, but do not turn your back on the coyote. Back-tracking on the route you took will often lead you out of a den area or away from protected pups. If you have a pet on a leash, get it under control and have it sit next to you. Do not release it or command it to attack the coyote(s). If you are on horseback, slowly leave the area by retracing your route. Report any incidents of aggressive coyotes to local authorities including your local animal control agency. If you are in Cleveland Metroparks and have a cell phone, contact Cleveland Metroparks Rangers at 440-331-5530. Advise them of your location to the best of your ability by noting trail markers, facilities, and roadways. If you do not seek assistance at the time of the encounter, please contact the Rangers the same day to report the incident. A coyote reporting form is available for reporting the details of a sighting.

If you are bitten or scratched by a coyote, wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water and then seek immediate medical attention. Although most nuisance coyotes are healthy, they can carry rabies. Because rabies infections in humans are nearly always fatal, medical authorities recommend post-exposure immunization whenever a person comes into direct contact with a wild coyote. Rabies may be transmitted by a bite or scratch from an infected coyote or from your pet after it has been attacked. If a dog is bitten, a rabies booster should be administered immediately.

### **Am I or My Children In Danger From Coyote Attack?**

Coyotes are normally shy and retiring and rarely show themselves to humans. During the months of February through June mating, gestation, birth, and then rearing/weaning of pups takes place. Juveniles in the family group will work together to defend the pups and multiple den sites if they perceive a threat. Keep young children within close proximity and within your sight at all times when visiting Cleveland Metroparks.

Be extra alert between the months of February to June. If you have a pet dog with you, keep it on a leash and only under charge by an adult. On occasion, coyotes might kill small dogs and cats. People in residential areas should not leave small dogs or cats outside and unattended.