

# The Cunning Coyote

Perhaps no other wild animal has endured the wrath of humans while evoking such genuine heartfelt admiration than the coyote. Some people curse their existence; Native Americans consider them to be the smartest animal on earth (“God’s dog”) and many urbanites revel in opportunities to see and hear these vocal predators.

Coyotes are extremely adaptable animals and rapidly adjust to changing conditions. In the past, wildlife managers have found that coyote populations can actually expand rather than decline in response to eradication attempts. As a result, a variety of lethal and nonlethal control methods are used to manage populations and control damage.

Found in most of North America, coyotes are most abundant on the open prairie and deserts. They are comfortable in the country, mountains or in cities, as long as there is appropriate shelter and food. As a result, people must be aware of their presence and take precautions to avoid conflict with them.

With a better understanding of coyotes and their habitat, humans can coexist with these adaptable and cunning animals.

# When Coyotes Meet People

A coyote’s behavior varies depending upon its environment. In the wild where they are actively hunted and trapped, coyotes are generally elusive. Near cities or in areas where hunting and trapping are not allowed, coyotes may be aggressive. In urban settings, they can lose their fear of people and may threaten domestic pets. Although attacks on humans are rare, there have been cases where coyotes have attacked both children and adults.



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# What To Do If You Live In Coyote Country

- If you live in areas where coyotes have been seen, **PROTECT YOUR PETS!** Coyotes will attack and kill cats and dogs. Do not allow your pets to roam, especially at night. Make sure your yard is appropriately fenced. We suggest at least a 6-foot fence or better yet, keep your dog in a completely enclosed kennel.
- Do not allow dogs to run with coyotes. Although it appears they are “playing,” coyotes can turn on dogs to defend their territory.
- Don’t leave pet food outside. This invites wildlife into your yard and problems may result.
- Protect livestock, especially chickens, young calves and sheep. Contact your local extension office for appropriate methods to prevent depredation.
- Keep your garbage in a storage facility or in a tightly sealed container. Clean garbage cans regularly to reduce residual odors by using hot water and chlorine bleach.



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## What To Do If You Meet A Coyote

- Coyotes provide an enjoyable wildlife viewing experience. Keep your distance and do not approach the animals. Enjoy the opportunity to view wildlife.
- Keep your pets on a leash when walking them.
- If a coyote approaches you or your pet, you can throw rocks or sticks to frighten it away.
- Use a loud, authoritative voice to frighten the animal.

# We’re Here to Help

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is responsible for managing, conserving and protecting wildlife. Your concerns about wildlife are our concerns as well.

## Colorado Parks and Wildlife Offices

If you have questions or problems related to coyotes, please contact CPW. Our offices are open Mon. – Fri., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For after-hours emergencies, contact the Colorado State Patrol or your local Sheriff’s Department.

## CPW Headquarters - Administrative Offices

6060 Broadway  
 Denver, CO 80216 . . . . . (303) 297-1192

- Brush . . . . . (970) 842-6300
- Colorado Springs . . . . . (719) 227-5200
- Denver . . . . . (303) 291-7227
- Durango . . . . . (970) 247-0855
- Ft. Collins . . . . . (970) 472-4300
- Glenwood Springs . . . . . (970) 947-2920
- Grand Junction . . . . . (970) 255-6100
- Gunnison . . . . . (970) 641-7060
- Hot Sulphur Springs . . . . . (970) 725-6200
- Lamar . . . . . (719) 336-6600
- Meekeer . . . . . (970) 878-6090
- Monte Vista . . . . . (719) 587-6900
- Montrose . . . . . (970) 252-6000
- Pueblo . . . . . (719) 561-5300
- Salida . . . . . (719) 530-5520
- Steamboat Springs . . . . . (970) 870-3333



**COLORADO**  
 Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

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COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

# Living With Coyotes



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HOW TO AVOID WILDLIFE CONFLICTS







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## Coyote Capsule

The name “coyote” (*Canis latrans*) is derived from the Aztec word “coyotl.” Coyotes are found throughout the United States (except Hawaii) and in most of Canada. Prior to 1900, coyotes were restricted to areas west of the Mississippi in the United States and west of Ontario’s Lake Nipigon in Canada.

The coyote is a member of the canid family which includes both wolves and domestic dogs.

The coyote’s success is attributed to the decline of wolf populations and the coyote’s own ability to adapt. Coyotes have adjusted very well to human-disturbed environments, and now thrive in close proximity to people.

Coyotes are opportunistic hunters. They prey on small mammals, domestic pets, livestock and domestic fowl but will readily eat carrion and plants. A coyote will adjust its diet depending on the food that is available.

In Colorado, coyotes are classified as a game species and may be taken year round with either a small-game or furbearer license. Landowners may kill coyotes without a license on their land if the coyotes threaten their property or livestock.

## Physical Appearance

- Coyotes range in color from near black to off-white. Coyotes in the Southwest deserts are the smallest and lightest in color, whereas those in the northern forests are the largest and darkest. Colorado coyotes are usually rust-colored with a white or gray throat and belly.
- Like other predators, coyotes vary in size. The males are larger than the females. The average size of a coyote is 37 inches long and 18 inches high. Their weight varies from 20 to 50 pounds.
- The coyote is distinguished by its long, narrow snout, pointed ears and general dog-like appearance.

## Tell-Tale Signs

- Coyote tracks are very similar to other members of the dog family. Imprints show four toes and toe nails; front tracks are larger than the rear. The front tracks are 2 to 3 inches long and 2 inches wide. Rear tracks are 2 inches long and 1.5 inches wide.
- Their scat is variable in size and consistency, depending on diet. It often contains hair, berries, bone fragments and seeds. You are likely to find droppings along trails, atop knolls, near boulders or prominent tufts of grass.
- Coyotes may be the most vocal of all land mammals. Although most people are familiar with the coyote’s howl, the animal actually has a language that incorporates a variety of sounds. They have long, clear calls in addition to barks and yips. Their vocalizations are designed to bring individuals together or let other coyotes know their location.



## Habitat

- Coyotes have expanded their range over the last century. They are found in all habitats, ranging from grasslands and deserts to urban areas and mountains.
- Coyotes are common in areas where rabbits, mice and gophers live. These may include lush rangelands or overgrazed pastures.
- In order to provide shelter for their pups, coyotes den in a wide variety of places, including brush-covered slopes, steep banks, rock ledges, thickets and hollow logs. They will also dig their own burrows. Dens of other animals are frequently used.



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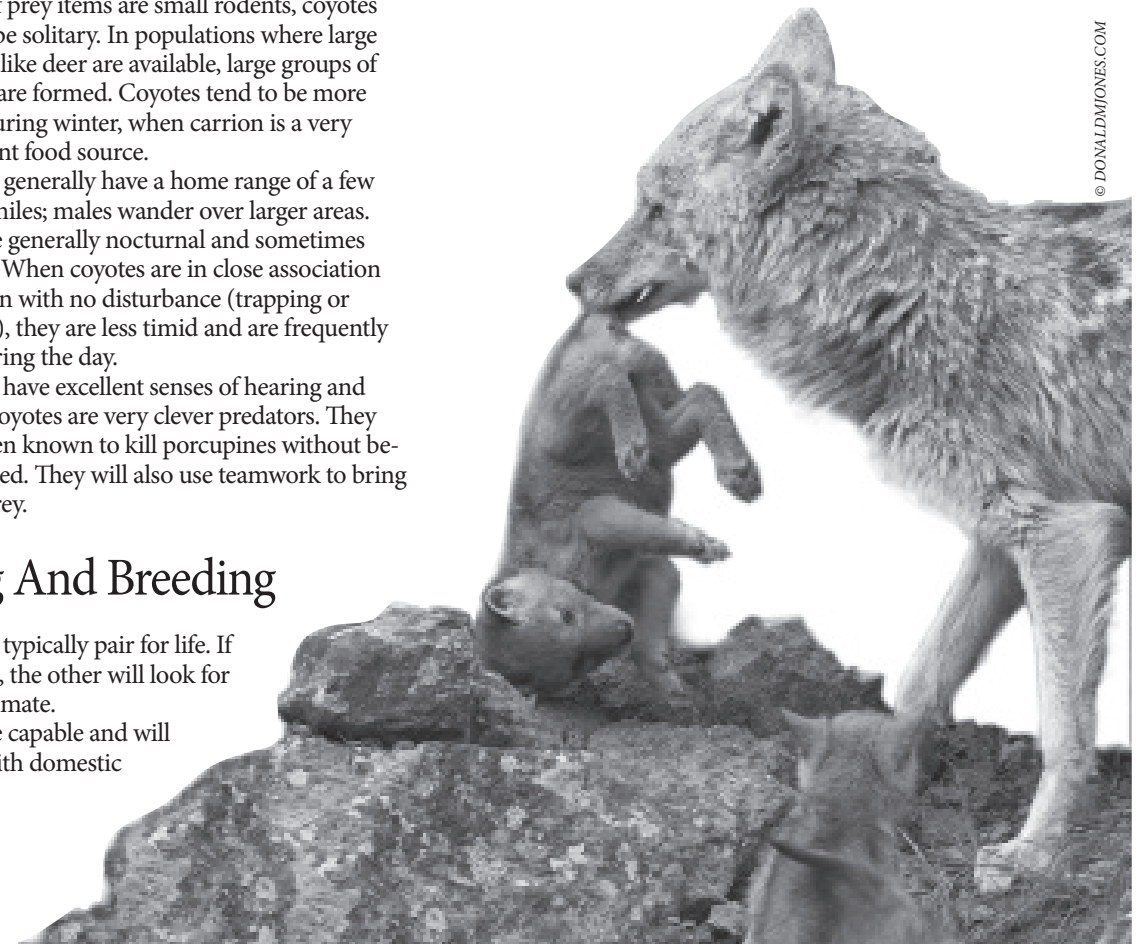
## Behavior

- Coyotes may travel alone, in pairs or small groups. One factor that seems to affect coyote sociability is prey size. In populations where the major of prey items are small rodents, coyotes tend to be solitary. In populations where large animals like deer are available, large groups of coyotes are formed. Coyotes tend to be more social during winter, when carrion is a very important food source.
- Females generally have a home range of a few square miles; males wander over larger areas.
- They are generally nocturnal and sometimes diurnal. When coyotes are in close association with man with no disturbance (trapping or hunting), they are less timid and are frequently seen during the day.
- Coyotes have excellent senses of hearing and smell. Coyotes are very clever predators. They have been known to kill porcupines without being quilled. They will also use teamwork to bring down prey.

## Mating And Breeding

- Coyotes typically pair for life. If one dies, the other will look for another mate.
- They are capable and will breed with domestic dogs.

- Breeding occurs between January and March. Males are capable of breeding when they are less than one year old.
- Pups are born from April to mid-May. The litter size is determined by local population density and food availability. More pups are born when there are low coyote densities and when food sources are abundant.
- The female prepares the den. The male assists in the raising of the young and initially supplies most of the food. The pups are born blind and hairless. They begin eating meat at eight weeks of age and start hunting between 8-12 weeks.
- The pups disperse between November and March. The family may hunt together temporarily in mid-winter but do not form true packs.
- People should never approach pups or attempt to take them from a denning area. Even if you see pups unattended, their parents are usually just a short distance away. Adults rarely abandon their young.



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