

Coyote Watch and Information

(Prompted by postings on Nextdoor. Montage and by notifications by email to the editor after increased sightings in our neighborhood.)

Coyote Range

The coyote, formerly found primarily in the northwest corner of the United States, has adapted to changes caused by human development. Coyotes have a very broad range of adaptation. They are seen traveling alone, in pairs, and in packs. They live within and can occupy a range of up to twelve square miles and use urine to mark their territories. They can run at a speed of 40 mph and can scale eight foot high walls and fences easily.

They have been spotted as far North as Alaska and New England, and now as far South as Florida. Coyotes are now being commonly spotted in many urban areas. For example, pairs have been spotted in cities as big as Los Angeles and Dallas. They are one of the only populations of wild animals that seem to be mostly increasing rather than decreasing in population and range.



Coyote Diet

The coyote's very broad diet allows them to survive in many different territories. Coyotes have a keen sense of sight, smell, and hearing, which allow them to survive in many different areas. Food is what makes the coyote's habitat. Wherever the food is, is where the coyote needs to be. They have a variety of calls that help defend their territory as well as strengthen bonds and communication. Although coyotes dig their own dens, they have been known to burrow out small fox and badger holes. They are also found in small mountain crevices. These dens are only used for tending to the young and the rest of the year these dens are abandoned.

A coyote's main diet consists of mice, rats, insects, rabbits, etc. They are known to hunt day and night, either alone or in packs. Coyotes will occasionally hunt larger animals but not alone. They have also been known to eat out of open garbage cans.

Coyote Behavior

At the present times coyotes are more afraid of humans than we are of them. Some instances have shown coyotes becoming more brazen and aggressive towards humans. Instances in which people feed these animals has given the coyote a sense of trust of humans that through adaptation may lead them to become less afraid and more aggressive toward humans in the future.

Coyote attacks on people are very rare. Apparently more people are killed by errant golf balls and flying champagne corks each year than are bitten by coyotes. The risk of a human being bitten by a dog is far, far greater than being bitten by a coyote. There have only been two recorded incidences in the United States and Canada of humans being killed by coyotes. One involved a child in Southern California in the 1980s and the other a 19-year old woman in Nova Scotia in 2009. However, the State's last report indicates an increase in documented occurrences of coyote aggression and attacks on people, using data from SDA Wildlife Services, the California Department of Fish & Game, and other sources.

Coyote attacks are preventable by modifying human behavior and educating people about ways to prevent habituation. In many human attack incidents, it turns out that the offending coyote was being fed by people. In many other instances, people were bitten while trying to rescue their free-roaming pet from a coyote attack. Less often, people are bitten by cornered coyotes, or even more rarely, rabid coyotes.

According to the Humane Society, hazing is the best method / deterrent to move an animal out of an area or discourage an undesirable behavior or activity. Hazing can help maintain coyotes' fear of humans and deter them from neighborhood spaces and backyards.

Hazing Methods

The Humane Society recommends using a variety of different hazing tools because coyotes can habituate to individual items, sounds, and actions.

- Yell and wave your arms while approaching the coyote.
- Use noisemakers (e.g. your voice, whistles, air horns, bells, soda cans filled with pennies or marbles, pots and pans banged together).
- Use projectiles (e.g. sticks, small rocks, tennis balls, rubber balls).
- Try other repellents (e.g. hoses, water guns with vinegar water, spray bottles with vinegar water, pepper spray, bear repellent, or walking sticks).

Important to Remember

The Humane Society reminds everyone.

- NEVER run away from a coyote!
- If the coyote doesn't leave at first, continue approaching it and/or increase the intensity of your hazing until it runs away. If it runs a short distance away and then stops and looks at you, continue hazing him until he leaves the area completely.
- If a coyote returns after you've successfully hazed it, continue to haze the coyote as you did before. It typically takes only one or two times to haze a coyote away for good.
- Contact authorities and do not interact with a coyote that you suspect of being sick or injured. Although coyotes are skittish by nature and generally aren't aggressive towards people, engaging animals who are sick or injured can result in unpredictable behavior.

Preventing Coyotes

Coyotes will feed on a wide variety of foods and have also been seen feeding on carrion (dead animals). It is not rare at all to find up to a dozen rodents in the stomach of a coyote. Once natural food sources in a given area have been depleted, lone animals or those belonging to a pack will move on to better hunting grounds - but usually return at a later date.

There are a few things that can help prevent coyote occurrences. First of all, keep all pets and pet food and their water indoors or in a secured kennel. Try to avoid feeding wild or feral cats as they are part of the diet of a coyote as well as the food you feed the cats. Minimize your vegetative ground cover and pick up any fallen fruit from fruit trees as the fruit attracts the small mammals upon which the coyote feeds. Keep garbage cans closed and secured.

More Information

More information on Coyotes can be found on the State of California, Department of Fish and Game Website. <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/News/Coyote> or by calling CDFG locally at (760) 200-9158