

What do coyotes look like?



© Robin's View Photography

- Brownish-gray with a light gray to reddish, cream-colored belly
- Slender muzzle
- Bushy tail
- Typically weigh between 20 to 50 pounds
- They often appear heavier due to a thick, double coat of fur

What do coyotes eat?

Coyotes are opportunistic mammals. Up to 70 percent of a coyote's diet consists of small mammals (mice, rabbits, rats, squirrels, voles, etc.). The remaining 30 percent is a combination of fruits, vegetables, insects, fish, birds, eggs and other available items. In urban areas, coyotes also prey on rats, squirrels, garbage, fallen fruit/berries from trees and small pets.

When are coyotes most active?

Coyotes can be active any time, day or night, but are especially active at dawn and dusk. Conflicts with pets occur year-round and are more likely to occur during the breeding season (February and March). Because young are born in the spring, food requirements of the nursing females and growing young remain high until late summer. As people and their pets spend more time outdoors during this time, the possibility of a coyote encounter increases.

Can we make them leave?

Coyotes have adapted to neighborhoods because our environment supports them. Populations may fluctuate, but coyotes probably won't leave. Eradication programs in North American cities have proven to be

expensive failures. These animals have adapted to our presence and have lost their natural fear of us. That doesn't mean that you can't do anything — you can. It is imperative that communities work together to instill the healthy and natural fear of humans back into the coyotes — for their health and safety and ours. Coyotes are quick learners, and consistent negative experiences can teach them to avoid people.

What you can do

You have options when it comes to dealing with coyotes in your neighborhood:

- **Do nothing.**
If you have no concerns about coyotes, you can go about your business. However, we recommend you understand the possible risks to your pets and yourself.
- **Take steps to prevent conflict.**
Follow the advice in this brochure to eliminate attractants around your property and safeguard your pet when walking in open spaces or areas where coyotes may be present.
- **Haze coyotes when you see them.**
Every citizen can help both people and coyotes by taking action to re-instill them with a healthy and natural fear of people. Clap your hands, yell, honk an airhorn or throw small rocks or sticks when you see coyotes so they can re-learn to avoid humans.
- **Evaluate lethal control for coyotes.**
State law (Colorado Revised Statute 33-6-107(9)) allows you to manage coyotes that are causing damage to your property. This management may only be performed on your property. Be aware that cities and counties may have more restrictive ordinances and laws. Contact your city and county officials to find out what options are permitted.

For more wildlife information or to report the feeding of coyotes, or their aggressive behavior towards humans, please contact the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., by calling (303) 291-7227. After hours, call Colorado State Patrol at (303) 239-4501. Information is also available on our Web site at www.wildlife.state.co.us

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is the state agency responsible for managing wildlife and its habitat, as well as providing wildlife-related recreation. The Division is funded through hunting and fishing license fees, federal grants and Colorado Lottery proceeds through Great Outdoors Colorado.

Your Guide to Avoiding Human-Coyote Conflicts



© Willis Anderson

Coyotes in the Front Range?

While coyotes are found throughout the West, they are extremely adaptable and can thrive in urban areas. From downtown Denver to the smallest suburb, coyotes are not new to residential communities. They can and will be found in any neighborhood that provides their basic needs — food, water, shelter and space.



Why are they here?

Residential areas provide habitat for coyotes. Plentiful food sources exist, such as mice, rabbits and voles. These small animals feed on birdseed, berries and garbage, which are commonly found and easily accessible. Shelter and water can be found in landscaped parks and yards. Space is plentiful throughout parks, trails, and natural areas. As coyotes adapted to the presence of humans, they have lost their natural fear of us.

What attracts coyotes to your neighborhood?

Coyotes are attracted to neighborhoods due to the availability of garbage, pet food and even pets, which coyotes see as prey. The following list illustrates some of the attractants that draw coyotes close to people. Remove these attractants to discourage coyotes from visiting your property:

- Outdoor pet food or water
- Birdseed or food sources that attract small mammals
- Accessible garbage or compost
- Fallen fruit or berries from trees or shrubs
- Shrubs, woodpiles, decks or any other structure that can provide cover or be used as a den

Most conflicts between large dogs and coyotes are the result of territorial behavior.



How can you protect your pet?

It can be difficult to accept, but pets can be seen as a food source to coyotes and large dogs can be seen as a threat or possible mate. Coyotes have taken pets from backyards, open spaces and even right off the leash. Keep your pet current on vaccinations. Reduce the risk to your pet by following these guidelines:

Cat Owners:

The only way to guarantee your cat's safety is to keep it indoors. Outdoor cats also face potential death from cars, diseases, foxes, parasites, raccoons, dogs and birds of prey such as owls.

Dog Owners:

- Always supervise your pet outside, especially at dawn and dusk
- Keep your dog on a short leash while recreating — avoid retractable leashes
- Do not allow your dog to play or interact with a coyote
- If possible, pick up your dog when coyotes are visible
- Avoid known or potential den sites and thick vegetation
- Like domestic dogs, coyotes will defend their territory and their young
- If you must leave your dog outside, secure it in a fully enclosed kennel

When are coyotes a risk to you?

Although naturally curious, coyotes are usually timid animals and normally run away if confronted. Coyote attacks on humans are rare.

In many cases these attacks occur as a result of people feeding coyotes. Coyotes have adequate food supplies and are capable of surviving in the city without our help. A coyote that associates humans with food may become demanding and aggressive. A coyote that bites a person must be destroyed. By feeding coyotes you put yourself, the neighborhood and coyotes at risk. It is unlawful to feed or intentionally attract coyotes in most urban areas.

Be Prepared

If you have concerns about encountering a coyote, you may want to keep a deterrent handy. Deterrents can include rocks, pots and pans, vinegar in a water gun, paintballs, air horns or a repellent spray. Contact local authorities to ensure that you are using a legal method.

Do what you can to discourage a coyote's approach

- Be as big and loud as possible
- Wave your arms, clap and throw objects at the coyote
- Shout in a loud and authoritative voice
- Do not run or turn your back on the coyote
- Face the coyote and back away slowly

Teach your children

- Never approach wild animals or dogs you don't know!
- If a coyote approaches you, wave your arms, stomp your feet and tell it loudly to **Go away!**
- Call for help
- If the animal doesn't leave, walk out of the area, keeping the animal in your sight

