

## Quick Facts about Coyotes

- ♦ Coyotes migrated to Ontario from the West over 100 years ago, and have adapted well to both urban and rural environments.
- ♦ Changes in land use, agricultural practices, and natural food shortages can all contribute to increased coyote sightings in your area.
- ♦ A coyote is able to run for hours at a time, and usually cover a range of 10 to 15 kilometers. This distance can expand during harsh winter weather.
- ♦ Coyotes are considered to be non-confrontational, but are known to be very curious and experimental.
- ♦ Coyotes, unlike wolves do not form structured packs. A pack of coyotes is usually a group of siblings. A Male and female are the fundamental social unit.
- ♦ Coyotes have good eyesight, hearing and a keen sense of smell.
- ♦ Coyotes are successful at surviving even in the presence of people because of their adaptable behavior.

## FACT SHEET

### Coyote *Canis latrans*



#### What does a Coyote look like?

- ♦ Coyote is one of the seven members of the Canidae found throughout Canada. Other members of the family include; the wolf, red fox, arctic fox, grey fox, swift fox and dog.
- ♦ The coyote is considered small compared to the grey wolf, with adults typically weighing between 10 and 22 kg.
- ♦ Coyotes also vary in length with an average of 1.1 to 1.4 meters long and with a shoulder height of 58-70cm.
- ♦ They typically have a grey, Buffy or reddish fur on top and along the sides, with lighter colourings on the under parts. Coyotes have a pointed nose with a rufous top, a grey patch located between the eyes and a bushy, black tipped tail.

#### What does a Coyote eat?

- ♦ Coyotes are considered to be opportunistic feeders that often consume a variety of foods including; garbage, fallen fruit, birdfeeder seed, garden crops and pet food. However their main diet is comprised of small mammals like rats, mice, shrews, squirrels and rabbits. This natural rodent control is beneficial to both city and rural dwellers alike.
- ♦ In rural areas, coyotes prey upon poultry, sheep, and calves. Although very uncommon, some urban coyote will prey on domestic cats and small dogs probably due to the fact they closely resemble their natural prey source.



*Coyote at 50 Point Conservation Area.  
Photo by Dan Cornell.*



*Typical Coyote den.*

### Interesting Facts

- ◆ Coyote pups start to emerge from the den around three weeks of age, and by the time they are two months old they will begin to follow their parents to large prey or carrion.
- ◆ Pups are generally weaned by six weeks of age. By that time they are usually moved to larger quarters such as dense brush patches and/or sinkholes along water courses.
- ◆ The adults and pups usually remain together until late summer or fall when pups become independent.
- ◆ Coyote pups can sometimes be found in groups until the breeding season begins.

## Where do Coyotes Live?

Coyotes typically reside in park-like and naturalized areas throughout the Hamilton Area. They are capable of travelling great distances, commonly utilizing ravines, hydro corridors and highway thoroughfares.

- ◆ Coyotes prefer to find secluded locations for den sites, and often choose areas that are near stream banks.
- ◆ Although less common, coyote will sometime build dens in hollow trees and dense brush piles.
- ◆ Their dens sites are quit difficult to locate and it is not unusual for a coyote to maintain several den sites. This is to help avoid detection.
- ◆ Coyotes often build their dens in abandoned woodchuck holes, which they expand to about 30cm in diameter and about 3 meters in depth.
- ◆ When the pups are at a certain age, they will often accompany their parents on hunting excursions, usually coving a large area daily.
- ◆ This family unit would be considered a small pack and if you are lucky they can sometimes be seen.



*Great example of concealed den. The den is dug into the root system of a Red pine tree.*

## When do Coyotes Breed?

- ◆ Coyotes typically breed in February and March, about 60 to 63 days later in April and May a litter is produced. Females are known to sometimes breed during the winter following their birth; this is usually when their food source is plentiful.
- ◆ The average litter size is around five to seven pups. Although uncommon, more than one litter can be found in a single den.
- ◆ Both adult male and female coyotes hunt and bring food to their young for several weeks. Other adults associated with the pair may also help in feeding and caring for the young.
- ◆ Coyotes commonly hunt as singles or pairs. Traveling long distances is common while hunting.

## How to co-exist with Coyotes

Coyotes are very intelligent animals that are also; adaptable, curious, experimental and opportunistic. Although their curiosity may sometimes lead them into unwanted areas, they are considered as a rule shy, cautious and non-confrontational. Since they are intelligent, they are often drawn to areas where there is a readily available food source. They are known to be creatures of habit and will therefore frequent certain areas in search of food. Hunting in an urban area is a learned skill, as is hunting for domestic pets and coming in close proximity with humans. This is a wildlife species that is important and has a positive impact on this area's biodiversity and ecological integrity. Using the preventative tips listed below, we can learn to discourage coyotes from our residential areas and avoid negative interactions and conflicts. With education, the fear of this animal will diminish along with its negative appeal. It is imperative that we learn to co-exist peacefully.

- ◆ Please do not feed Coyotes! Do not leave out any type of food that may attract a coyote.
- ◆ Garbage should always be stored in a sealed container and placed at the curb on the day of pick up.
- ◆ Keep all pets indoors. Never let pets roam free, especially if you reside near a natural area. The natural area is not only inhabited by coyotes but many other wildlife species.
- ◆ To help prevent attacks on pets please always walk your dog on a leash, especially when visiting a natural area or park.
- ◆ Give them space. Help protect and restore natural areas where coyotes inhabit.
- ◆ Reduce contact with coyotes by avoiding the areas they frequent, especially during high activity hours—dawn and dusk.
- ◆ If come upon a coyote, stay calm and let the animal move on. If you feel threatened do not approach the animal, instead make a loud noise or sudden movement to scare the animal off. Most likely the coyote that stops to stare is only curious and has no intention to approach or attack.

---

## What if you Live on a Farm?

Listed below are some suggestions on how to protect your farm and farm animals from coyote, as well as how to co-exist with the them.

- ◆ Always keep farm animals within a fenced area, the fence needs to be a minimum of six feet high and should be secured six inches into the ground to help deter coyotes.
- ◆ Have a secure shelter for animals to stay in during the night.
- ◆ It is also a good idea to utilize a guard animal such as a llama or a donkey.
- ◆ Install scare devices, such as motion activated lights or alarms, near animal housing areas
- ◆ Provide rabbits with a wire-covered enclosure that includes fencing which is buried below the ground
- ◆ Provide rabbits with escape shelters with openings that are only large enough for them to get through
- ◆ Chicken wire is not recommended on enclosures; since it is easily destroyed by determined coyotes.

## Hamilton Conservation Authority – Current Initiatives

HCA is dedicated to the conservation management of its lands and natural areas, and coyotes play an important ecological role in maintaining diversity of species and the health and integrity of a variety of ecosystems. Coyotes can have a top-down effect on ecosystems by regulating the number of foxes, skunks, raccoons and various rodents through competitive exclusion and direct killing. Coyotes have no known predator except for humans. It is essential that we learn to co-exist with this amazing animal. We must work together to ensure that the coyotes rightful place within this ecosystem is secured.



Although considered very rare, attacks can occur (only a few have been documented in all of Ontario) and it is important to be aware of potential risks to pets and small children. There have been far more documented attacks on people by domestic dogs than by Coyotes. Coyotes are a shy, non-confrontational animal, and usually attack pets as a result of an animal being fed. Feeding often causes Coyotes to lose their healthy fear of humans.

### Great Resources on the Web

There are a number of excellent websites that can help you learn more about coyote and their habitat

#### ***Coyote Watch Canada***

<http://www.coyotewatchcanada.com>

#### ***Ministry of Natural Resources***

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/FW/2ColumnSubPage/271326.html>

#### ***Hinterland's Who's Who***

<http://www.hww.ca>

#### ***City of Hamilton***

<http://www.hamilton.ca/CityDepartments/PlanningEcDev/Divisions/ParkingBylawServices/AnimalControl/Education/LivingwithCoyotes.htm>

#### ***Ontario SPCA***

<http://www.ontariospca.ca/what-we-do/humane-education/wildlife/fact-sheets.html>

---

For more information on Coyotes in Hamilton, please contact:

**Lesley McDonell, Ecologist**  
**Hamilton Conservation Authority**  
**838 Mineral Springs Road, P.O. Box 81067**  
**Ancaster, Ontario L9G 4X1**  
**(905) 525-2181**  
**[www.conservationhamilton.ca](http://www.conservationhamilton.ca)**

