

# the URBAN COYOTE



Coyotes have long inhabited the cities of southern Ontario, and have been seen and heard in the City of London, particularly in areas that border green spaces.

The City of London and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority support the preservation of natural areas and Environmentally Significant Areas within London. Healthy wildlife populations within the city are considered an asset to the community.

The coyote has adapted very well to life in the city. They are able to live in close proximity with their human neighbours, even though we are known to be their only natural predator.

Coyotes do not generally pose a threat to human safety, and are very necessary for the control of small rodents. However, it is understandable that residents have concerns and questions about coyotes in their neighbourhood. In order to live in harmony with these animals, we must learn to understand and respect them.

## **Where do Coyotes live?**

The park-like and naturalized areas of London and other cities provide excellent habitat. Coyotes can travel great distances via ravines, hydro corridors, and highway thoroughfares. Coyotes prefer secluded locations for den sites, and often choose areas near stream banks or ravines. Their den sites are difficult to locate and it is not unusual for a coyote to have several den sites, in an attempt to avoid detection. When coyote pups are old enough to hunt, they will accompany their parents on their hunting excursions, covering vast areas daily. This family unit would constitute the small packs that can sometimes be seen.

## **What food attracts Coyotes?**

Coyotes natural diet is small rodents, such as mice, rabbits and groundhogs. They also eat birds, eggs, snakes, turtles,

fish, fruit, plants and road kill. Since they are opportunistic, they have added new food groups to their urban diet. This includes garbage that is carelessly stored outdoors. Often, the garbage attracts smaller rodents, causing an overpopulation of mice and rats, which then attract coyotes. Outdoor pets, such as rabbits and cats, as well as livestock, are also attractions.

## **What about my dog?**

The dog has always been considered a natural enemy by the coyote. However, an attack by a coyote on a vulnerable dog could happen if the dog is left outdoors unattended, or allowed to run at large.

## **What about the safety of my family?**

Coyotes have adjusted well to living in close proximity to humans. They are generally shy animals and would prefer to avoid confrontations with people. In fact, the Ministry of Natural Resources is not aware of any cases of coyotes attacking people in Ontario. Common sense dictates that you never leave children unattended, and it is important to teach children about animal safety. By following simple precautions, we can learn to live with wildlife and avoid any negative conflicts.

## **Why not trap and relocate Coyotes?**

Coyotes are extremely intelligent and almost impossible to live trap. Licensed trappers use leg hold traps and snares to catch coyotes. This is not always a suitable option due to the danger that these traps pose to pets and humans. Provincial legislation prohibits the relocation of wildlife from their home territories; therefore, trapped animals must be released in the same area or destroyed. Research has demonstrated that wildlife relocated from urban areas will typically return or become a problem elsewhere, and that when coyotes are hunted, they compensate by producing larger litters and expanding their range.

# COYOTE facts

- Coyotes are very active at dusk, dawn and during the night.
- Coyotes are omnivores, eating whatever is available, such as small mammals and birds, carrion, fruit and improperly stored garbage.
- Coyotes breed in late winter and their young are weaned at six weeks. Most young disperse in fall and winter to establish territory.
- Coyotes do not form structured packs like wolves. A pack of coyotes is usually a group of siblings. Male and female are the basic social unit.
- Coyotes are not considered major rabies carriers; in fact, they represent less than 1% of all diagnosed incidents in wild animals in Ontario over the past 40 years.
- Coyotes vary in colour from blondes to reds and browns. They range in weight from 35 to 45 pounds, although their thick fur often makes them appear heavier than they really are.
- Coyotes are very smart and adaptable.
- A coyote can run for hours at a time. They usually cover a range of 10 to 15 kilometres, but this distance may expand in harsh winter weather.
- Coyotes are non-confrontational but very curious and experimental.
- Coyotes and foxes do not associate with each other.
- In native lore, the coyote is known as the "Trickster."
- Coyotes communicate with a broad range of vocalizations.



## Co-existing with Coyotes

Coyotes are intelligent, adaptable, curious, experimental and, most of all, opportunistic. As a rule, they are also shy, cautious and non-confrontational. They are drawn to places where they can find "easy pickings." They are creatures of habit and will frequent certain areas in search of food. Hunting in an urban area is a learned behaviour, as is hunting domestic pets or coming in close proximity with humans. By using the preventative tips below, we can learn to discourage coyotes from our residential areas and avoid negative interactions or conflicts.

- Never feed coyotes! Do not leave any type of food outdoors for any animal, including pets. Bird feeders attract birds, squirrels and rodents, which may in turn attract coyotes.
- Garbage should be stored in sealed containers and placed at the curb on the day of pick up.
- Never compost meat products.
- Keep pets indoors. Never let pets roam at large, and always walk your dog on a leash.
- To prevent coyotes from entering a yard, the yard must be enclosed with a solid, six foot wooden fence.
- If you must walk in a park area that is known to have coyote activity, try to walk in small groups, carry a personal audible alarm and a flashlight, or carry an umbrella you can open and close to frighten them away. If you are approached by a coyote, stay calm and wait until it moves on. You can also make a loud noise or sudden movement to scare it off.

## For more information

For more information, please contact:  
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This brochure was originally developed by the City of Kitchener.