FACT SHEET

COYOTE *Canis latrans*

**Natural Area Preservation**
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CITY OF ANN ARBOR
Natural Area Preservation

# WILDLIFE

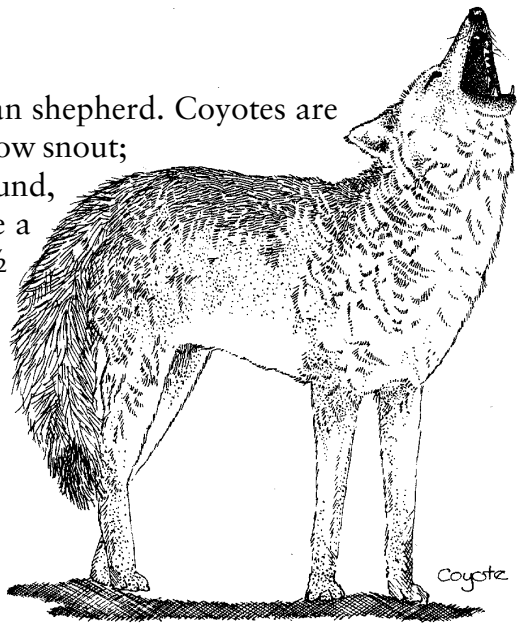
## Coyote
## *Canis latrans*

### History

Coyotes have been expanding in range across the country over the last century. They are currently found in every state, with the exception of Hawaii. The ability of coyotes to adapt and live successfully in urban landscapes has allowed them to fill a gap in the food chain left by human disturbance of natural ecosystems. Coyotes can live in almost any habitat, and tend to be opportunistic. Their main food source is usually rabbits, mice and other small mammals when they are available, but they can also eat carrion, garbage, fruit, berries, insects, vegetation - almost anything! Coyotes are not often seen, despite their large range, because it can take several square miles to support a coyote family, making density of animals quite low. A family of coyotes may consider an area of 40-100 square miles their home range. They tend to be most active around dawn and dusk or during the night in urban areas, but healthy animals can be seen during the day as well.

### How Can They Be Identified?

Coyotes appear, superficially, like a small German shepherd. Coyotes are more slender; have wide pointed ears; a long narrow snout; and a bushy tail which they carry low to the ground, not up in the air like a dog, or straight back like a wolf. They are on average 3 feet long and 1 ½ feet tall, weighing 20 to 50 pounds. Color varies widely but tends toward gray or tan on the back, occasionally rusty or dark brown, with a lighter chest and belly.




*The mission of Natural Area Preservation is to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and to foster an environmental ethic among its citizens.*

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## Do We Need to do Something?

There is little to fear from wild coyotes, as long as appropriate distance is maintained. There are a few things you can do to ensure your safety and that of your pets.

- **Do not feed coyotes or leave pet food out in the yard.** This makes them lose their natural fear of humans and attracts them to residential areas where problems can occur.
- **Keep your pet on a leash!** This protects your pet from injury and encounters with coyote feces, which can contain worms. And it's the law!
- **Watch your pet** if it is out in the yard. Especially avoid letting them out alone at night, near dawn or at dusk if you know coyotes to be nearby.
- If you let pets out in the yard, **be sure your yard is properly fenced**.
- **Do not allow your pet to play with, or approach a coyote.**
- **Do not approach or pet** coyotes or their pups, and never approach a suspected coyote den.
- **Keep your trash and compost secured** and **animal matter out of your compost piles** to discourage coyotes from foraging in your neighborhood.
- **Use a loud voice and throw rocks or sticks** if a coyote approaches you or your pet. Coyotes can also be discouraged from entering your yard by motion activated sprinklers.

## Benefits of Coyotes in Our Community

Coyotes fill a necessary role in our ecosystem. As predators, they keep the small mammal and rodent populations down. An unnaturally high population of prey animals, such as rabbits and woodchucks, would over-browse native wildflowers and shrubs to the detriment of native plant biodiversity. Many of you who garden are familiar with their peskiness! Without predators like coyotes to keep their population in check, omnivores like raccoons and opossums would also have a negative impact; they can raid turtle and bird eggs with devastating effects. As scavengers, coyotes act as garbage collectors, cleaning up carrion in the parks and on the roads.

Coyotes are social animals which communicate to the other members of their community by vocalization and scent. Their calls can be heard by park neighbors throughout Ann Arbor. Many enjoy listening to them and feel the excitement that this unique wildlife observation provides. Coyotes high degree of adaptability has often been cited as an inspiration by those who must learn to adjust as the environments change.

*Natural Area Preservation is funded by Ann Arbor's voter-approved Repair and Restoration Millage.*