



# Co-Existing with Coyotes



## WHAT DO COYOTES LOOK LIKE?

The coyote has the general appearance of a small shepherd type dog; standing 23 to 26 inches at the shoulder with a slim muzzle, pointed ears and a bushy tail. The fur is generally a grizzled, and can range from light tan or reddish tan to almost black. The typical coyote weighs 30-45 pounds. Coyote tracks are similar to dog tracks, however, a coyote's tracks are usually longer than they are wide and they are more compact. Typical coyote tracks are 2-3 inches long and 1 ½-2 inches.

Coyotes are typically most active beginning at twilight and continuing throughout the night. In some areas they may be seen during the day, especially when left undisturbed.

## WHAT DO THEY EAT?

Coyotes are opportunistic feeders. While rabbits probably comprise the majority of their prey, they also eat rodents and other small mammals, and supplement their diet with fruits, berries and insects. They will eat dead/decaying animals as well as, to a limited degree, upon deer fawns and occasionally on adult deer. On occasion coyotes will prey on domestic pets. Pet predation is usually due to the territorial nature of the coyote and lack of alternative prey base in suburban areas.

## WHAT ATTRACTS COYOTES?

Coyotes should not feel comfortable around people or your homes. If you see a coyote in your area do your best to make it feel unwelcome. You can discourage coyotes from your property by removing such attractants as accessible garbage, outdoor pet food, fruit that has fallen from trees or shrubs and rodent habitats such as neglected yards, garages or sheds.

## WHEN ARE COYOTES A RISK TO PEOPLE?

Although naturally curious, coyotes are usually timid animals and normally run away if challenged. Coyotes can be a risk to people if they have become comfortable around humans, usually as a result of feeding. It is not normal for coyotes to attack or pursue humans, especially adults. It is a learned behavior. You can discourage coyotes from feeling comfortable around you by responding to their presence and removing food sources.

## WHEN ARE COYOTES A RISK TO PETS?

If you own a cat, the only way to guarantee its safety is to keep it indoors. If you own a small dog, you can greatly reduce the risk of coyote conflict by keeping your dog on a short leash, walk your dog at times and places with pedestrian traffic, keep your dog in front of you, don't walk alone and supervise your dog when it is off leash. Coyotes could lure free roaming dogs away from their owners and attack. Coyotes pose very little risk to large dogs. Keep large dogs on leash, except in designated areas and discourage your dog from interacting with coyotes. Coyotes may consider loud or large dogs a threat to their territory and become aggressive.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If you see a coyote near you or your home do not ignore it. This may cause it to lose its natural fear of people which can eventually lead to aggressive behavior. To discourage a coyote immediately make loud noises, shout or bang loud objects together, wave your hands or large sticks, throw small stones, spray coyote with hose or use a commercial repellent spray on bold animals that refuse to leave. **IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911.** If a coyote is aggressive, approaching a person, biting or growling and snarling unprovoked **DIAL 911** and continue to exaggerate the previously mentioned actions. Don't turn and run away because the animal may view it as an opportunity to chase. Keep eye contact. Move slowly toward other people, a building or an area of activity.

## REPORTING AND TRACKING:

**Observation:** noticing or taking note of tracks, scat and/or vocalizations without seeing a coyote.

**Sighting:** visual observation of one or more coyotes from a distance.

**Encounter:** An unexpected direct meeting between human and coyote that is without incident.

**Incident:** a conflict between a person and a coyote where a coyote exhibited behavior creating an unsafe situation without physical contact.

**Attack:** an aggressive action by a coyote that involves physical contact with a person and/or a person is injured by the actions of a coyote.

In an effort to maintain a consistent tracking system of coyote/human interactions the public is encouraged to report any of the above activities to the Sullivan's Island Police Department. Additionally, we ask that you report any intentional feeding incidents, unsecured trash and active den sites.

**TO REPORT COYOTE INTERACTION** or for additional information please contact Sullivan's Island Animal Control at 843-743-7200. Additional information is available at [www.sullivanisland.sc.gov](http://www.sullivanisland.sc.gov) and [www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/coyote/coyoteinfo.pdf](http://www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/coyote/coyoteinfo.pdf)