



# Coexisting with Coyotes

Coyotes, once ghosts in our midst, are now sighted more frequently in Ottawa's urban and rural environment. By understanding their normal habits and behaviours, we can learn to live in peaceful coexistence with these intelligent and resourceful creatures.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry reports that coyote populations remain stable in our area. Urban sprawl is a key factor influencing coyote sightings. Dens are destroyed through development, new territories must be found to hunt and forage, increased human infrastructure, such as roads, and shrinking forest corridors affect wildlife movement. The resilient, intelligent coyote adapts well to these changing environmental conditions, resulting in more frequent sightings.

People can become aware of coyote signs and understand the differences between true threats and coexistence.

## Quick facts

- coyote sightings are normal in Ottawa and surrounding rural areas
- while they are mostly nocturnal, it is not unusual to see coyotes out during the day
- normally, only the alpha parents mate, with an average of 5 pups; the rest of the pack helps with rearing
- coyotes will protect their territory and pups from a potential threat (e.g. from an off-leash dog)
- a coyote's main diet consists of rodents and rabbits, keeping these populations in check
- they are opportunistic feeders and may prey on small pets left unattended
- coyotes are normally afraid of people and try to avoid them
- bold behaviour is unusual but can occur when a coyote has been fed by people, intentionally or not

## Keep it in perspective

- negative interactions with coyotes are rare
- there were more than 500 calls in 2016 to the city of Ottawa regarding dog bites
- coyotes do not distinguish between a wild animal (e.g. adult rabbit or groundhog) and a domestic pet (e.g. adult cat)
- any cat left to roam at any time of day or night could become prey to raptors, foxes, dogs, coyotes, or cars—keep cats safe indoors

## In you encounter a coyote nearby

- never run from any canine, including coyotes
- pick up small animals or kids to be safe
- be bold and assertive—face the coyote, stomp your feet, make yourself big by waving your arms

- stand your ground or back away slowly
- make noise by clapping your hands, shouting loudly (but don't scream which can mimic an injured animal), using a shaker can, whistling
- throw something (e.g. clump of dirt, rock, stick) toward (not at) the coyote

## Prevent coyote visits to your yard

- never feed wildlife
- keep pet food and water bowls indoors
- keep compost bins and trash cans secured
- put trash out in the morning of pickup, not night before
- clean wild bird seed from your lawn; overflowing bird feeders attract coyotes, owls, hawks, foxes, cats and dogs for the prey (birds and rodents) that gather in larger numbers
- clean fallen fruit from the ground
- supervise your small dogs in your yard; keep dogs on leash when in known coyote territory
- for their safety (and that of native wild songbirds and small mammals), keep cats indoors, on leash or in a secure outdoor enclosure
- teach children about wildlife and how to safely respond to a stray dog or coyote nearby

## Understanding true threats

- A coyote that approaches people aggressively should be reported to the city at 3-1-1. Signs are similar to those shown by aggressive dogs and include agitated barking (unprovoked), raised hackles, snarling, growling and lunging.
- An injured or mangy coyote is less able to hunt so it is often seen in urban areas looking for easy food sources. Call RVWS for advice.