



# Coexisting with Coyotes

Coyotes, once ghosts in our midst, are now seen more frequently in Ottawa's urban and rural environment. 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.

Understanding coyote normal habits and behaviours, and learning how to deal with and prevent encounters can ease fears and empower us to live in peaceful coexistence with these intelligent and resourceful creatures.

## Quick facts

- Coyotes normally try to avoid people, but they are curious about change and activity in their territory
- While mostly nocturnal, it's not unusual to see coyotes out during the day
- Adult coyotes normally weigh between 25 and 35 pounds
- Normally, only the alpha couple mates, with an average of 5 pups; the rest of the pack helps with rearing
- Coyotes are territorial and will protect it and their pups from potential threats (e.g. other coyotes, off-leash dogs, people)
- Most coyote conflicts occur during the pup rearing season (April-July), and when young coyotes disperse from their families (September-November)
- Coyotes keep rodent and small mammal populations in check
- Opportunistic feeders, they may prey upon cats and small dogs left unattended; larger dogs may be seen as a threat
- Bold behaviour is unusual but can occur when a coyote has been taught to associate people and their properties with easy food sources, whether feeding is intentional or not

## Keep it in perspective

- The Canada Safety Council (2009) estimated that over 460,000 people are bitten by dogs each year in Canada
- By comparison, fewer than 3 people per year were scratched or bitten by coyotes in Canada (Alexander & Quinn, 2011)
- There were more than 500 calls in 2016 to the City of Ottawa regarding domestic dog bites

## Prevent coyote visits to your yard

- Never feed coyotes or encourage human interaction
- Keep pet food and water bowls indoors
- Keep compost bins and trash cans secured
- Put trash out in the morning of pickup, not the night before
- Clean brush piles, seed and fallen fruit from the ground; which can attract prey that coyotes feed on
- Clean up after your pet

## Keep your pets safe

- Supervise small dogs in your yard; keep dogs on a short leash when in known coyote territory
- Do not let dogs chase or harass wildlife

- For their safety (and that of wild songbirds and small mammals), keep cats indoors, on leash or in a secure catio

## If you encounter a coyote nearby

- Do not turn your back on and never run from any canine, including coyotes
- Pick up children and small pets; keep larger dogs close on a short leash
- During pup rearing season (April-July), you may be a threat; be assertive but back away slowly and give them room
- Don't create a conflict where it doesn't exist—if a coyote is acting normally by avoiding humans and pets, leave it be
- If a coyote approaches:
  - be bold and assertive, stand your ground, face the coyote, wave your arms
  - make lots of noise, clap your hands, shout loudly (don't scream), use a shaker can
  - throw something (e.g. clump of dirt, rock, stick) toward (not at) the coyote
  - shine a flashlight when walking at night

## Understand true threats

- If you encounter a coyote during pup rearing time and leave, it may follow you for some distance before it stops or returns to their pups. This is not predatory stalking but 'escorting' you out of their territory.
- An injured or mangy coyote is less able to hunt so it is seen more frequently and in closer proximity to people than normal
- Signs of aggression are similar to those shown by aggressive dogs and include agitated barking (unprovoked), raised hackles, snarling, growling and lunging. Report aggressive or fearless coyotes to the City of Ottawa at 3.1.1.

## Why trapping, relocating and killing don't work

- Relocating wildlife more than 1 km is illegal in Ontario
- Relocated wildlife often do not survive because of competition with native wildlife and the inability to find appropriate territory, food and water
- Killing or relocating coyotes does not solve co-existence problems, opens up territory for new coyotes to move in, and can encourage larger litters and younger coyotes to breed