



You Can HELP... GIVE 'EM GOOD PRESS!

Coyotes, like many carnivores, suffer from "bad press." Take every chance to let people know that coyotes help us by reducing the number of mice and rats, not to mention getting rid of dead animals. Wily coyotes are opportunists, adapted to living near people. Inform others by setting up a coyote display in your school, invite speakers to inform your class, or create a coyote brochure. Contact the FON for more information.

TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Coyotes and many other animals leave tracks in the mud when walking, running or trotting. Often you can find tracks near streams, riverbanks or at the edges of ponds where many creatures go for a refreshing drink. The coyote's tracks may, at first sight, resemble those of a dog. If you look closely, you will see that different members of the canine family have different tracks and walk very differently. Try to match the tracks with the word descriptions.

coyote	domestic dog	red fox	gray wolf
walking	walking	walking	walking
trotting	back feet land first when trotting		
front feet			

Most wild members of the canine family walk with their back paws almost or completely aligning with their front paws, so they only leave what appears to be one set of tracks.

- 1 Prints of this large canine have claws separated from the toe pads.
- 2 Tracks of this medium-sized dog relative have claws attached to the middle toe pads.
- 3 Like its Arctic relative, this small canine's toes have fur on the bottoms.
- 4 This mammal drags its feet while trotting.
- 5 This canine often leaves a drag mark in the snow from its long furry tail.
- 6 Tracks often wander curiously, something its wild cousins can't afford.

Answers: 1 - gray wolf; 2 - coyote; 3 - red fox; 4 - coyote; 5 - domestic dog; 6 - coyote

For more about coyotes

Resources from the FON

Introducing Mammals Teachers' Guide

Coyotes on the Web

- www.borealforest.org/zoo/coyote.htm
- www.furmanagers.com/furbear/fur009.htm
- www.schoolnet.ca/vp-pv/mammals/e/list5.html
- www.city.mississauga.on.ca/animalserVICES/html/WLPro/WLProcoyote.htm
- www.indigenouspeople.org/natlit/rock.htm
- <http://hotcakencyclopedia.com/ho.ScentingContest.html>

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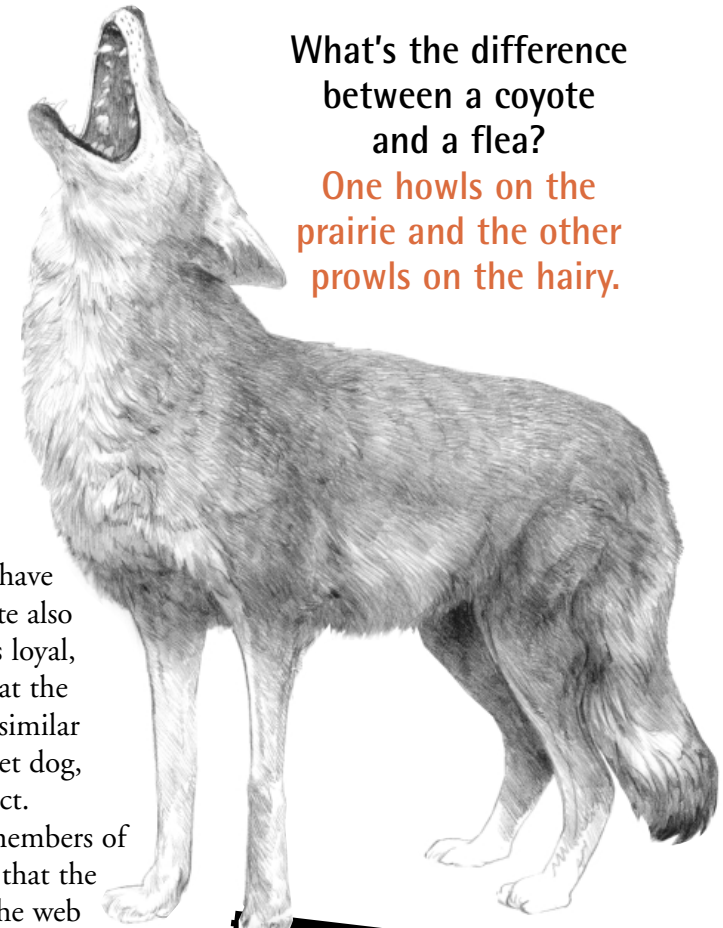


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COYOTES

CANINE OPPORTUNISTS



What's the difference between a coyote and a flea?

One howls on the prairie and the other prowls on the hairy.

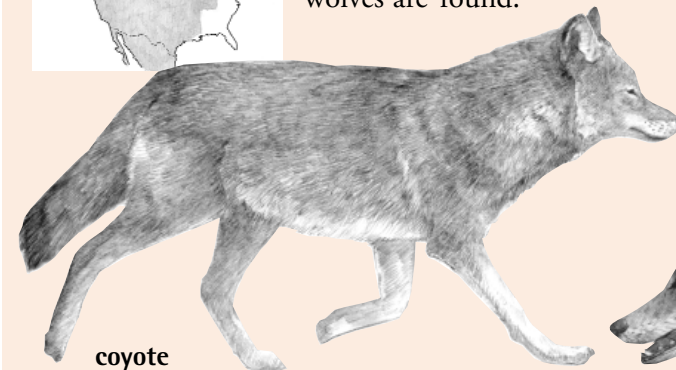
Coyote – wanderer, glutton, lecher, thief, cheat, outlaw, clown, survivor. These are just some of the words that have been used to describe this capable creature. Yet, a coyote also shares admirable characteristics with the domestic dog – it is loyal, adaptable, curious, intelligent and playful. We now know that the coyote and other canines (members of the dog family) have similar features. However, although a coyote might look like your pet dog, it is a wild animal and should be treated with care and respect.

People have historically had an irrational fear of all wild members of the canine family, including coyotes. Native people thought that the "tricky" coyote had the spirit of their ancestors. Check out the web sites at the end for some native people's stories about coyotes.

Did You Know...
 The coyote's scientific name, *Canis latrans*, means "barking dog."



Coyotes are a relative of the much larger member of the Canidae (dog) family, the gray wolf. They are also known as "brush wolves," prairie wolves and American jackals. Coyotes prefer open and brush-type habitats in contrast to forested habitats where wolves are found.



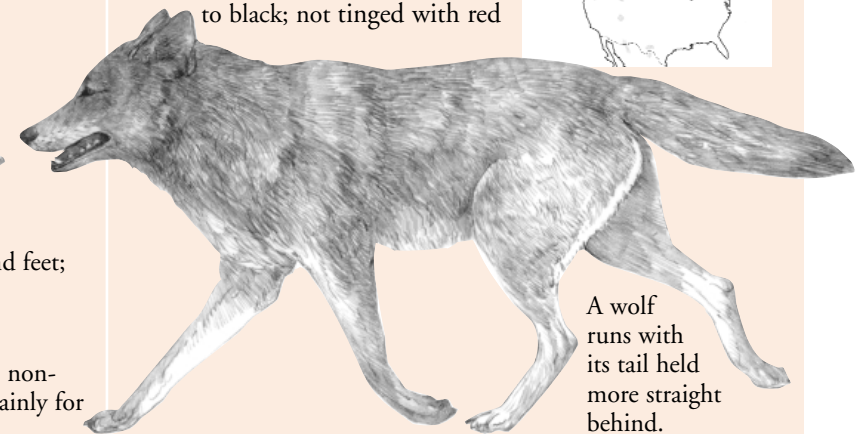
coyote

average weight: 8 to 15 kg
 height at shoulder: 58 to 66 cm
 colour: tawny/gray fur, tinged with red on legs, ears and feet; throat and belly light gray/whitish

A coyote, while running, points its tail downwards. Like other members of the canine family, a coyote has non-retractable claws – not usually used for defence but mainly for digging dens in which it raises its young.

gray wolf

average weight: 18 to 70 kg
 height at shoulder: 66 to 97 cm
 colour: usually gray but can vary from almost white in the Arctic to black; not tinged with red



A wolf runs with its tail held more straight behind.

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ONE OF THE FASTEST MEMBERS OF THE DOG FAMILY, THE COYOTE IS ABLE TO REACH SPEEDS OF UP TO 64 KILOMETRES PER HOUR!

COYOTES IN ONTARIO

An adaptable, agile hunter

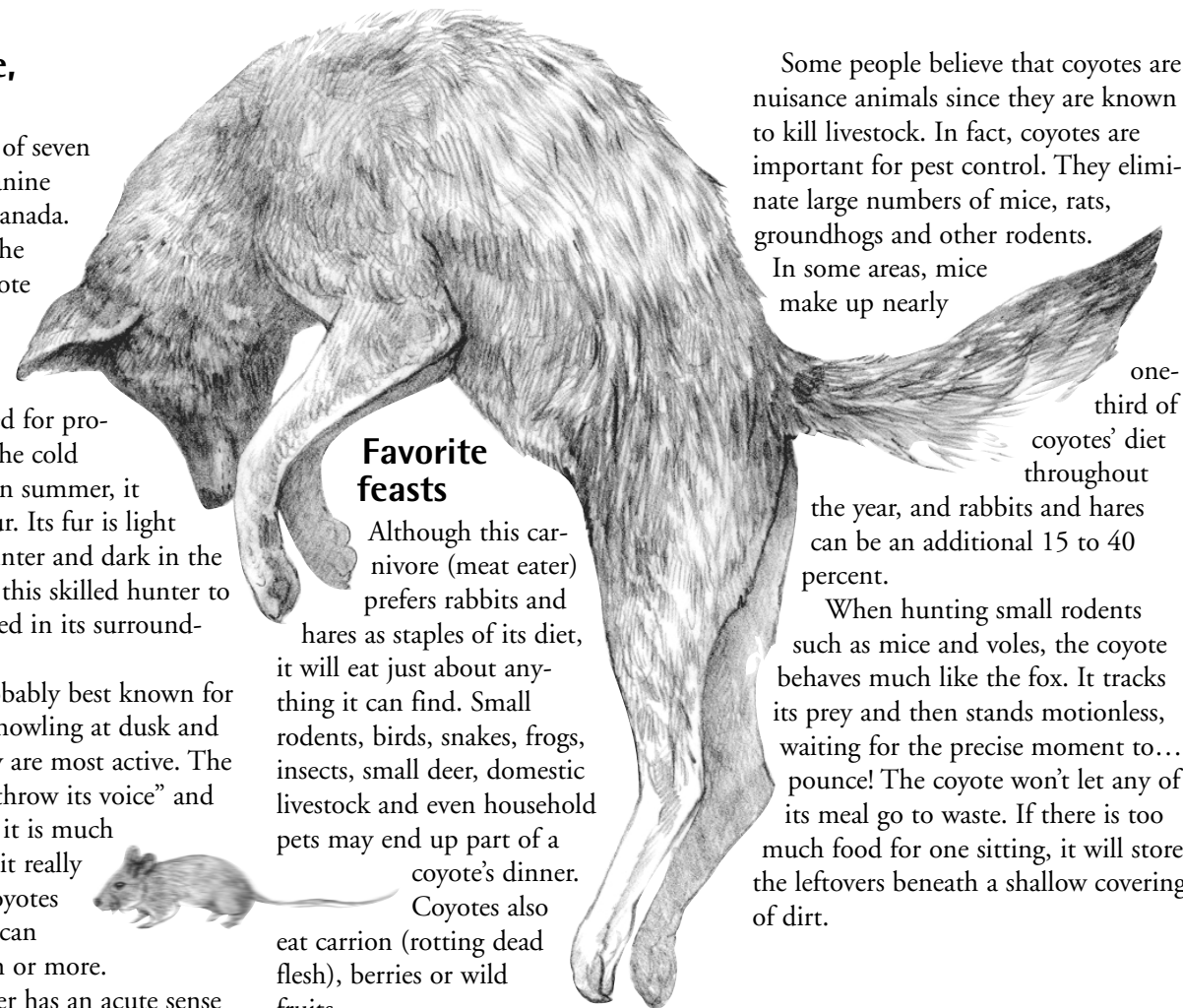
The coyote is one of seven members of the canine family found in Canada. Check below for the other six. The coyote has long, coarse guard hair and soft under-fur, which is well suited for protecting it against the cold Ontario winters. In summer, it sheds the under-fur. Its fur is light coloured in the winter and dark in the summer, allowing this skilled hunter to be well camouflaged in its surroundings.

Coyotes are probably best known for their yelping and howling at dusk and dawn – when they are most active. The coyote is able to “throw its voice” and make it seem as if it is much farther away than it really is. Two or three coyotes yelping in unison can sound like a dozen or more.

This agile hunter has an acute sense of smell and hearing and, like all top predators, is able to quickly change course when on the prowl for a tasty meal. One of the fastest members of the dog family, the coyote is able to reach speeds of up to 64 kilometres per hour!

Did You Know...

The other six members of the canine family found in Canada are the gray wolf, eastern wolf, red fox, gray fox, Arctic fox, and swift fox.



Favorite feasts

Although this carnivore (meat eater) prefers rabbits and hares as staples of its diet, it will eat just about anything it can find. Small rodents, birds, snakes, frogs, insects, small deer, domestic livestock and even household pets may end up part of a coyote's dinner. Coyotes also eat carrion (rotting dead flesh), berries or wild fruits.

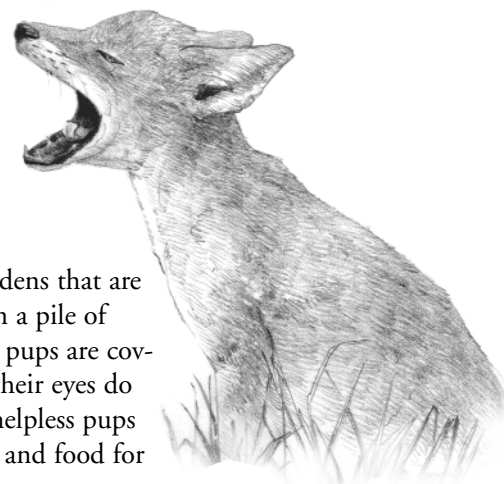
When there is an abundance of food available, coyotes will hunt together in a pack, however, when food is scarce, they will live and hunt alone.

Some people believe that coyotes are nuisance animals since they are known to kill livestock. In fact, coyotes are important for pest control. They eliminate large numbers of mice, rats, groundhogs and other rodents.

In some areas, mice make up nearly

one-third of coyotes' diet throughout the year, and rabbits and hares can be an additional 15 to 40 percent.

When hunting small rodents such as mice and voles, the coyote behaves much like the fox. It tracks its prey and then stands motionless, waiting for the precise moment to... pounce! The coyote won't let any of its meal go to waste. If there is too much food for one sitting, it will store the leftovers beneath a shallow covering of dirt.



Coyote pups

In April and May, coyote pups are born in dens that are often located at the base of a hollow tree, in a pile of rocks, or a dug-out burrow in the soil. The pups are covered with soft, brown fur when born, and their eyes do not open for eight or nine days. The tiny, helpless pups rely entirely on their parents for protection and food for the first few months of their lives.

The country coyote

Before European settlement in Canada, the coyote was mainly found in the Prairie provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba). As wooded areas were cleared to make way for farmland, towns and cities, the coyote's territory expanded eastward. The first sightings of coyotes in Ontario weren't until the early 1900s. About 40 years later, their population had spread into Quebec, and it took an additional 30 years to move into New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Another reason coyotes spread eastward was because wolves were eradicated (killed) by people to protect their livestock. With the wolves gone, the coyote was able to take over additional habitat without any competition. In addition, corn and grain in barns and silos brought lots of tasty mice and rats for the coyote to hunt.

The city coyote

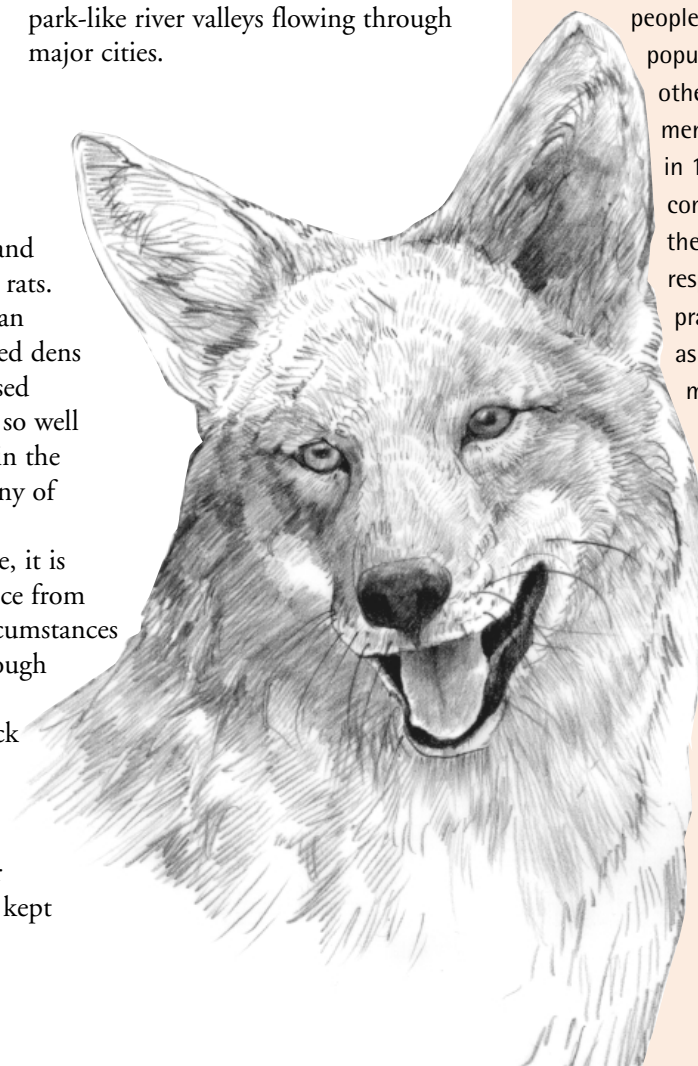
Where there are people, there is garbage, and where there is garbage, there are mice and rats. It is not only the increased garbage in urban areas that lures coyotes out of their secluded dens and into populated areas – it is the increased number of rodents. Coyotes have become so well adapted to urban life that they are found in the cemeteries, golf courses and ravines of many of Canada's major cities.

In areas where coyotes are known to live, it is important to respect and keep your distance from them and all wild creatures. Under no circumstances feed them or any other wild animal. Although there are few incidents of coyotes acting aggressively towards people, they will attack and kill domestic pets. It is therefore important to keep all pets leashed while walking in parks, ravines or along streams and creeks, and to be sure that your cat or dog is brought indoors before sunset, and kept indoors during the night.



In the wild, the coyote has a life expectancy of nine years or less. In addition to disease, black bears, wolves, eagles and cougars all kill coyotes, but people are by far the greatest threat. Coyotes are killed by farm machinery, hit by vehicles, and many more are shot, poisoned or trapped as “problem” animals.

Coyotes will live in a wide range of habitats including farmland, the edges of forests, swampy areas, parks and conservation areas, the edges of cities and towns and even cemeteries and park-like river valleys flowing through major cities.



About 80 percent of the woodlands and wetlands have been lost in Ontario since European settlement.

For some species, this spells disaster, but for the adaptable coyote, it has been an opportunity. The coyote actually prefers open fields and edge of woodlands, so the removal of forests has increased the habitat available for this opportunistic creature.

At one time in Ontario, people were paid for every coyote tail that they produced. This was called a “bounty,” which started in 1793 – before Canada was even a country! Coyotes continued to reproduce, and it eventually became clear that this was not effective in reducing the few “problem” coyotes that attacked livestock. Some studies showed that intensive killing of coyotes (and wolves) actually made them reproduce more in areas where

people were trying to control their populations. Because of this, and other reasons, the Ontario government ended the bounty program in 1972. Instead, today farmers are compensated for their losses, and there's an overall emphasis on responsible livestock management practices, using guard animals such as dogs, donkeys and llamas, promoting personal responsibility – keeping pets indoors and garbage secure – and a more respectful attitude towards all living creatures, including coyotes. But there are no restrictions on hunting or trapping coyotes in Ontario, so it is still legal to kill “nuisance” coyotes.

A coyote's tongue often hangs out of its mouth as it trots. Just like your pet dog, panting helps the coyote stay cool.