

Decoding Coyotes (*Canis latrans*)



Coyotes are Dog Relatives:

Coyotes look a lot like dogs and belong to the dog family. In Michigan other members of this family include the Red Fox—*Vulpes vulpes*, the Gray Fox—*Urocyon cinereroagenteus* and the Gray Wolf—*Canis lupus*.

All of these animals share similar characteristics, including a remarkable sense of smell, an elongated muzzle, long canine teeth and powerful jaws. Canines are excellent hunters and efficient predators. Plus, they are

intelligent and social in nature.

Coyotes Are Adaptable:

Coyotes are one of the most adaptable animals in North America. Coyotes have survived despite being hunted and trapped for centuries. Coyotes are primarily active at night and go unnoticed most of the time. Coyotes are wary of people and tend to stay away from humans. One key to the coyote's success is its amazingly diverse diet. Coyotes are really omnivores and will eat just about anything.

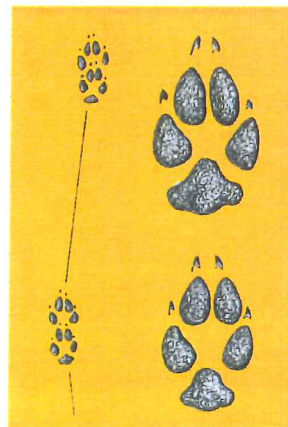
- Birds
- Snakes
- Frogs
- Garbage
- Livestock
- Grasshoppers/insects
- Rodents
- Carrion/road kill
- Fruits/vegetables
- Rabbits



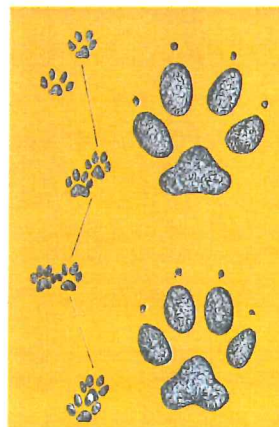
Comparing Coyotes to Dogs

- Coyotes have yellow eyes with large black pupils. Most dogs have brown eyes.
- Coyotes possess thick underfur with bushy tails. Many dogs do not have underfur.
- When running, coyotes hold their black tipped tails level.
- Coyote coats have many colors—buffy-gray to yellowish-gray to reddish brown. Its back from the neck to the tail and along its shoulders has black-tipped guard hairs. Coyotes have cream-colored throats and bellies.
- Coyote ears are held erect and pointed, while most dogs have drooping ears.
- Adult coyotes weigh 25-50 pounds. Males are larger than females.
- Coyotes are 43-53 inches long. The tail makes up about half its length.
- Coyote tracks look different than dog tracks—coyotes walk in a straight line—dogs do not.
- Coyotes walk with purpose. Dogs wander.

Coyote Tracks and Trail



Dog Tracks and Trail



A Year in the Life of Coyote:

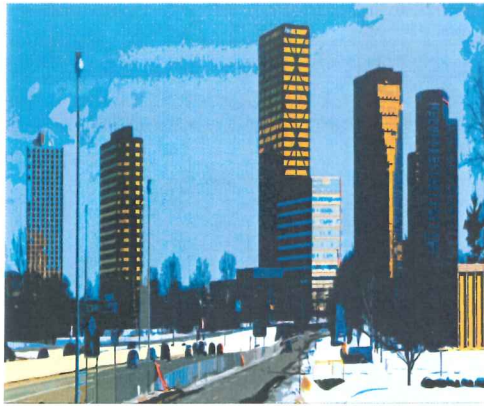
- **December:** Courtship begins; females choose a mate. Pairs bond and may remain together for years, but not necessarily for life. Females choose a mate.
- **Late January – February:** Coyotes breed/mate.
- **April:** Young are born in dens with four – seven pups per litter. Gestation takes 60 days. Pups are helpless for the first 35 days and depend on adults to survive.
- **May – June:** Pups venture out of the dens and begin to eat food regurgitated by adults.
- **July – October:** Parents care for young. Demand for food increases coyote activity, and may make them more visible to people.
- **October:** At six months, pups have teeth and are nearly full grown. Coyotes can be seen in family groups as mother coyotes train their young to search for food.
- **November – December:** Most young disperse to find their own territories. One or two pups may stay with parents if food is abundant.



Saving Spaces for Predators:

Predators like coyotes are essential to maintain healthy, balanced ecosystems. Coyotes prey upon deer as well as rodents, rabbits and other small mammals. Living with predators can be difficult for humans to accept, but understanding this important natural balance is one step towards sharing communities with predators like coyotes.





State University are currently acquiring data on coyotes in southeastern Michigan. Contact: Bill Dodge, (313) 577-8920, Bill.Dodge@wayne.edu.

Coyotes in Neighborhoods:

Coyote numbers are growing in Southeastern Michigan and incidents between people and coyotes are increasing. Coyotes have lived with people for hundreds of years, they were not found near cities until sprawl created contact between coyotes and people. There are no definitive statistics on coyote population in Southeast Michigan, but researchers at Wayne

If you see a coyote at the park, observe it from a distance. Never approach a wild animal.



Help COYOTE!

Using the map and grid, help coyote find his meal and the tracks of wild neighbors.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| ___ 1. Reptilian feast | ___ 9. Coyote track |
| ___ 2. Tree fruit | ___ 10. Turkey track |
| ___ 3. Keep trash from coyote | ___ 11. Rabbit track |
| ___ 4. Rodent lunch | ___ 12. Deer track |
| ___ 5. Insect appetizer | ___ 13. Cat track |
| ___ 6. Amphibian lunch | ___ 14. Dog track |
| ___ 7. Feathered meal | ___ 15. Squirrel track |
| ___ 8. Sweet shrubby treat | ___ 16. Red fox track |

Living With Coyotes:

Steps that you can take to reduce coyote conflicts:

- Never feed coyotes.
- Keep small pets inside at night.
- Cover garbage.
- **DO NOT LEAVE DOG OR CAT FOOD OR WATER OUTSIDE OVERNIGHT.**
- Place bird feeders so they are not accessible to coyotes or other nuisance animals. Never toss table scraps on the ground.
- When walking dogs at sunrise or sunset, keep pets on a leash.
- If you see a coyote around your home, shout, create noise and make a commotion to scare them away.
- Arm yourself with knowledge, not fear.



Scientists know that coyotes do not attack people and fewer than 1% of coyotes become nuisances. Knowledge and an informed perspective can help humans co-exist with wildlife, including coyotes.

