

Coexisting with Coyotes

Natural and Cultural History

The coyote has a long history of being feared and persecuted in the United States. As early settlers moved westward and destroyed the coyote's traditional food sources, such as pronghorn, deer, and bighorn sheep, the coyote adapted by hunting the young of domestic livestock. Because of this natural adaptation to a food source, humans declared war on the coyote and have hunted, trapped, and poisoned them since that time. Although most coyotes, especially in suburban, rural and wilderness areas no longer feed on domestic livestock, public perception of the coyote as a harmful and dangerous animal continues.

Habitat and Range

Coyotes have proven to be a highly adaptable species and despite attempts at extermination, their habitat ranges throughout North America from suburban to wilderness areas. They favor brushy habitat including oak woodlands, thickets, tall grasses, and the edges of fields near forests.

Diet and Role in Ecosystem

Coyotes eat a varied diet including meat, fruits and berries, garbage, insects, rodents, birds, deer, and carrion. Since nearly 80 percent of their diet consists of squirrels, rabbits, mice, rats and gophers, coyotes play a valuable role in controlling rodent populations and maintaining a balanced natural community. Though neighbors may not understand or appreciate the coyote, their presence signifies that your property management strategies are working successfully to achieve a diverse natural community.

Coyote Management

We recommend that you take several steps to ensure safety, increase wildlife understanding, and encourage support for your efforts to manage coyotes on your property. Consider the following:

To increase awareness and understanding:

- When people express fear or concern, try to get specific information about their sighting. Information about when and where coyotes have been seen will help you to establish what the coyote's range is, whether it has actually wandered off of your property, and when it is most likely to be observed. It will also tell you more about the coyote's habits. For example, you can learn whether it is actually raiding garbage cans. You can also determine whether it is posing an actual or potential threat, or whether people's fears are unfounded. Try to get a name, address, and phone number so that you can follow up with more information.



Coyotes typically weigh between 15-45 pounds, with Northern coyotes usually weighing more than Southern species. Mountain-dwelling coyotes tend to be dark-furred, while desert coyotes tend to be lighter brown in color, like the one pictured above at The Club at PGA West in La Quinta, California.

- Discuss the concerns that have been raised with your Resource Advisory Committee. Solicit their suggestions for responding to complaints.
- Inform staff that you are aware that coyotes have been observed on the course. Let them know that coyotes can coexist with people without posing a threat to their health or safety. Include some background information such as that provided above or other sources. Invite questions or concerns and designate someone who can answer queries.

To discourage coyotes:

- Never feed coyotes or leave garbage accessible for wildlife feeding. Secure garbage containers and eliminate odors. A small amount of cayenne pepper or ammonia in the garbage will discourage scavenging. Coyotes can become dependent on human food sources and increasingly tame when in regular contact with people (this is true for raccoons and opossums too!).
- Do not leave pet food outside. Neighbors may also be advised to keep pets indoors at night or accompany them outdoors when needed at night.
- Since no single control method is effective in every situation, a variety of control methods should be employed. The focus should be on damage prevention and control rather than eliminating coyotes.



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Additional information about coyotes can be found at:

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74135.html>
<http://audubonportland.org/wcc/urban/coyote/urbancoyotes>