

## Curious Coyote Facts



The coyote's Latin name, *Canis latrans*, translates to "barking dog." Researchers have identified eleven forms of vocal communication used by coyotes that include yips, barks and howls.



The best runners among the canids, coyotes can leap fourteen feet and run 25-30 mph, reaching speeds up to 40 mph over short distances.



Coyotes are strong swimmers and won't hesitate to follow prey into the water.



The expansion of coyotes across the United States is largely due to the nearly successful attempts to exterminate the gray wolf, a coyote predator.



The coyote has earned a place in many Native American folk stories, often portrayed as a prankster or trickster. It is also referred to as the Medicine Dog, Brother, Old Man Coyote and Little Wolf.



Early settlers had another name for the coyotes: "prairie wolf." This term was possibly coined to distinguish it from the timber wolf which also roamed the frontier.



### For more information:

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# Wild by Nature COYOTES



Information provided by:



# Was That a Coyote?

Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) are native to Kendall County and were abundant in Illinois before the first European settlers arrived. Decades of eradication efforts took a toll on the coyote population, and as recently as the 1950s they were considered uncommon in the state. Numbers began to rebound in the 1970s and now it's not uncommon to spot a coyote running in a field, crossing a road, or even trotting through a backyard.

Often described as resembling a small German shepherd, coyotes are grayish-tan to reddish-gray with a whitish belly and throat. They have relatively long, rusty or yellowish legs. The tail is bushy with a black tip and is carried below the height of the back rather than curved upward, even when running. Coyotes reach a shoulder height of about 24 inches and a body length of 27-36 inches with an 11-15 inch tail. Males can weigh anywhere from 17-44 pounds while females average slightly smaller at 15-40 pounds.

Coyotes have been widely admired (and despised) because of their incredible adaptability. While they are typically most active from dusk to the early morning hours, they can be seen at any time of day. They can live on their own or within a pack. They are found in a number of different habitats ranging from the colder temperatures of higher elevations to the searing heat of deserts; from isolated wet grasslands to densely populated suburbia. They eat a wide variety of foods, including fruit, birdseed, carrion, insects, frogs, toads, snakes, birds (including Canadian geese), mice, ground squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, raccoons, and other small mammals.

A coyote pack is usually a family group, consisting of a mated "alpha" (dominant) pair, young-of-the-year, and some offspring from previous years.

Coyote pairs commonly stay together for life, with mating occurring in February or March and pups being born in April or May.



The members of the groups share the duties of guarding the food and territory as well as feeding the pups. Despite claims of "exploding populations," coyotes are self-regulating in terms of numbers. Females adjust the size of their litters, anywhere from 6-19 pups, depending on numbers of local coyote residents and abundance of food. If populations are not disturbed (hunted or trapped), coyotes form strong, organized family packs with established territories, and do not allow other coyotes to enter. Home ranges can reach up to 70 miles, but recent research of urban coyotes shows a roaming range of 10 to 15 miles with up to 25 miles in some cases.

While some people may be upset or even frightened by the presence of coyotes, we must understand that they are not going away. No amount of "control" in the United States and Canada has ever eradicated the coyote. Killing, removing, or trapping coyotes only opens up territories and food resources, and encourages dispersed coyotes to move in.

Fortunately, simple precautions are all it takes to coexist with coyotes:

- NEVER feed coyotes, or leave food outside for any other animal, wild or pet.
- Supervise small and older pets and your children when they are outdoors.
- If you see a coyote in your yard, make a lot of noise until it runs away.
- The key to preventing problem encounters is to remind coyotes to have and keep their fear of people.

# Frequently Asked Questions:

## Why are coyotes coming so close to my house?

The rapid development of Kendall County has caused a tremendous loss of natural habitat, bringing coyotes closer to urban areas. Easy food sources such as pet food, open garbage cans, and birdseed all attract coyotes to residential areas.

## There are children in the neighborhood and I've seen a coyote. Do I need to be concerned?

While the possibility of being bitten by a coyote does exist, the probability of it actually happening is quite low. Healthy coyotes are not known to attack humans. Your child has a greater chance of being bitten by a pet dog or cat than by a coyote. Teach your children never to approach any wild animal, including coyotes.

## What should I do if a coyote approaches me?

Coyotes are typically frightened off by aggressive gestures, such as moving towards the animal while waving your arms and shouting in a loud, deep voice. Throw stones or sticks in the coyote's direction. If you are walking with a pet, pick it up or shorten the leash so that it remains close to you. Do not turn your back on or run from the coyote and, if possible, move towards an area of activity.

## Will a coyote eat my pet?

Some pets, especially small dogs and cats, might be seen as potential prey by coyotes. A larger dog can be seen as a threat to a coyote's security and may be attacked in order to drive it away from its territory. This is especially true if a den or pups are nearby. As a pet owner, you are responsible for your pet's welfare. Any pet left unattended is at risk. Keep pets in a secured area or on a leash when outside or accompany them, especially at night, to ensure their safety.

## Is it OK to feed a coyote?

No. NEVER FEED ANY WILD ANIMAL, including coyotes. Feeding coyotes teaches them to associate humans with food, eventually making them very bold and unafraid.