



Coyotes

(*Canis latrans*)

Understanding the habits and habitats of wildlife, and taking appropriate measures to prevent unwanted encounters, will help everyone to continue to enjoy the wonderful wild resources that still exist in New Jersey.

Coyotes are perhaps the most misunderstood wild animal in New Jersey. Coyotes are feared by many people. But is fear really necessary?

What should you do if you see a coyote in your neighborhood?

Studies suggest that the best way to deal with coyotes is to coexist peacefully with the area. The truth is that coyotes are normally much more afraid of humans than we are of them. Even in the most urban areas, coyotes are our neighbors - living peacefully among us and usually without our knowledge.

Perhaps we catch sight of a coyote running through our yard and then start worrying about its presence even though it has lived there for years without any problem.

Coyotes typically weigh no more than 35-40 lbs.

They eat berries, small mammals such as mice and cottontails, and they even help to control rat populations in cities.

There are some basic things you can do to ensure that you and your

neighborhood coyotes live together without conflict. First and most importantly, never feed coyotes. If you feed a cat or dog outside, remove all food and clean up spilled food before dark. Secure all garbage cans to prevent unintentional feeding.

Second, practice responsible pet ownership. Do not let pets outside unattended - especially at night. Do not use retractable leashes that allow your dog to wander a long distance from you during walks. As an extra precaution, pick up your small dog if you see a coyote nearby.

Third, do not approach coyote pups or a coyote den. Coyotes may defend their young if threatened. If you are approached by a coyote, it is likely that the coyote has become habituated due to direct or indirect feeding by humans. Face the coyote and be big and loud! Blow a whistle, shout and make noise. Do not run.

In addition, it is against the law in New Jersey to trap and relocate wildlife.

It is better to learn to accept coyotes that inhabit your neighborhood and use the measures outlined in this fact sheet to learn to peacefully coexist.

About Mercer County Wildlife Center

The Mercer County Wildlife Center is a state and federally licensed facility that cares for injured, ill and displaced wildlife. The Center provides these animals with the medical treatment and a temporary refuge before releasing them back into an appropriate wild habitat.

For more information regarding the work we do and the animals who share our environment, including a series of printable brochures that provide tips for coexisting peacefully with those animals, visit us online at: www.mercercounty.org/departments/mercer-county-park-commission/wildlife-center

For information on protecting bee hives and livestock, contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife Wildlife Control Unit at (908) 735-8793.

So although coyotes are often feared and misunderstood, practical methods of avoiding human-coyote conflicts are considered preferable to removal. Learn to live with your wild coyote neighbors, never feed them or encourage them to approach humans and remember that coyotes serve an important role in controlling prey populations.

Should coyotes be trapped and relocated to a more rural setting or to someone else's neighborhood?

The answer is no. It is illegal for members of the public to harm, trap or relocate wildlife out of season or without permits.

Further, coyotes can adjust litter size based on available food supply and population density with only the alpha male and female of a pack typically mating each year. If a coyote is removed, lower coyote population density may increase the number of pups being born and other coyotes will also quickly move into its place. Additionally, relocated coyotes often try to return to their home territories and are usually killed in the process. As a result, removing coyotes via lethal or non-lethal methods is not considered to be an effective population management technique.

Coyotes' threat to humans is surprisingly low. A study determined that coyote attacks in parts of the United States and Canada were largely related to humans directly or indirectly feeding coyotes. The study contrasts the rarity of these documented coyote attacks with the frequency of dog bites.*

* Coyote Attacks on Humans in the United States and Canada; White and Gehrt; 2009



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Dan Benson, *County Executive*

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