



RON JAMES/FLICKE

# COEXIST WITH *Coyotes*

If you live in North Carolina, you've probably seen a coyote, or know someone who has. The animal's unique ability to adapt to a wide range of habitats, including suburban environments, along with rapid human population growth across the state, has led to an increase in sightings. While in most cases coyotes are harmless, people can take steps to prevent conflicts with these animals.



MATT KNOTH/FLICKE

## **Coyote Quick Facts:**

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### **Where did coyotes come from?**

Coyotes were once found only in the mid-western portion of North America. But as Europeans settled across the country, subsequent landscape changes, coupled with elimination of wolves, allowed the coyote to expand its range toward the eastern United States. By the 1980s coyotes started to appear in western North Carolina as a result of natural range expansion from our neighboring states. Coyotes are now established in all 100 counties of North Carolina and live in many towns.

### **What do coyotes look like?**

Often described as a "mangy-looking dog," coyotes weigh 20–45 pounds (similar to a mid-sized dog) with, typically, reddish to dark gray thick fur. They have long slender snouts, a bushy tail, and pointed ears.

### **Do they make noise?**

Yes, coyotes howl. While some find it unnerving, this howl serves many purposes, none of which are malicious. If you

hear a family of coyotes howling, it is easy to think that the area is overflowing with coyotes. In reality, there are usually only 2–6 coyotes, including the pups.

### **Will coyotes attack me or my child?**

Attacks on people, including children, are extremely rare. Normal coyote behavior is to be curious, but wary, when close to humans. Like other wildlife, they will become bold and habituated if people feed them, either purposely or inadvertently, such as with garbage or outdoor pet food. They rarely contract rabies.

### **Will coyotes attack my pet?**

Possibly. Coyotes view outdoor cats and small unleashed dogs as prey, while larger dogs are viewed as threats to their territory and/or their pups. Coyotes are most likely to confront larger dogs during the mating and pup birthing period, January through June.

### **What should I do if I see a coyote?**

Simply seeing a coyote is not cause for alarm. If you see a coyote frequently, you and your neighbors should take steps to prevent conflicts with it and other wildlife.



BRYCE BRADFORD/FLICKR

## Preventing Conflicts with Coyotes

- Secure garbage in containers with tight-fitting lids, and take them out in the morning or pick up, not the night before. Coyotes and other wildlife will scavenge trash.
- Don't feed or try to pet coyotes. Feeding a coyote rewards that animal for coming in close proximity to people. Once a coyote becomes habituated, it loses its natural wariness of people and may become bold and aggressive.
- Protect your pets by keeping them inside, leashed, or inside a fenced area.
- Install coyote-proof fencing around your home to protect unsupervised pets.
- Feed pets indoors or remove food when your pet is finished eating outside. Coyotes and other wildlife are attracted to pet food left outdoors.
- Keep bird-feeder areas clean. Use bird feeders that keep seed off the ground. Coyotes are attracted to small animals congregating on the ground. If coyotes are frequently seen, remove all feeders.
- Close off crawl spaces under sheds and porches. Coyotes and other wildlife may use these spaces for resting and raising young.
- Cut back brushy edges in your yard, which provide cover for coyotes.
- Don't be intimidated by a coyote. Maintain its wariness by throwing a small object, such as a tennis ball, at it, making a loud noise, or spraying it with a hose. Let it know it is unwelcome near your home.
- Clear fallen fruit from around fruit trees. Coyotes are omnivorous and regularly consume fruit as part of their diet.
- Educate your neighbors. Your efforts to prevent coyote conflicts will be less effective if some neighbors are still providing foods.
- Allow hunters or trappers access to your property, so the local coyote population can be managed. Coyotes avoid areas in which threats are perceived.

### *If you already have a problem with a coyote:*

- Contact a Wildlife Damage Control Agent, a private individual who charges for his/her services. A list is available at [ncwildlife.org](http://ncwildlife.org) under "Have a Wildlife Problem."
- Contact a licensed trapper during the regulated trapping season. See the list at [ncwildlife.org](http://ncwildlife.org) under "Have a Wildlife Problem."
- Coyotes can be hunted year-round using firearms and archery equipment. However, check to see if local ordinances restrict the discharge of firearms. A landowner can shoot a coyote in the act of causing damage.

For answers to questions and technical guidance on addressing coyote concerns on your property call 919-707-0050.



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