

COYOTES IN OUR COMMUNITY

Coyotes have been here in southeastern Michigan, including the City of Livonia, for many years. The coyote population can increase or decrease from year to year depending on different factors including the harshness of the winters, available food sources, lack of predators and disease.



DEVELOPMENT

Due to the development of natural areas the frequency of human-coyote interaction has increased. Contrary to popular belief, coyotes are not necessarily being displaced due to development and in many instances, it is the development itself that attracts the animal. The ravines, drainage systems, nature and park areas, cemeteries and railroad tracks in our community give the coyotes the ability to roam for several miles and will provide natural cover for dens.

BREEDING

The breeding season for coyotes begins in late December and that, along with the loss of cover with the dropping of the leaves, results in increased sightings. As fall approaches, pups begin dispersing from the den site to establish home ranges of their own. Coyotes are active day and night; however, peaks in activity occur at sunrise and sunset.

COYOTE SIGHTINGS

Livonia Animal Control sometimes receives calls about coyotes from someone who has just seen a coyote for the first time in their neighborhood. Rarely is there a reason for alarm, but people need to be respectful of coyotes and follow the same precautions as with any other wild animal. Several common-sense strategies are useful in discouraging coyotes from an area.

DISTINGUISHED FEATURES

First, is it a coyote you're seeing? The coyote resembles a German Shepard dog but is lighter in color, has yellow slanting eyes, longer legs and a more prominent point to the nose and ears. Most coyotes are gray to blonde, but some show a rust or brown coloration and have a bushy tail that is tipped with black. The coyote will vocalize with high-pitched wails; sharp howls and "screams" which go up and down the scale very rapidly. They have been reported as "a sound like something being killed".

HABITS OF A COYOTE

Coyotes can be spotted traveling alone or in pairs and on rare occasions a larger group may be seen. Coyotes are opportunistic and will eat almost anything available. Small mammals such as mice, voles, rabbits and squirrels are preferred foods. However, the following round out their diet:

- Berries
- Birds
- Frogs
- Fruits
- Insects
- Plants
- Seeds
- Snakes

URBAN AREAS

In urban areas, coyotes are attracted to garbage, garden vegetables, and pet foods. They will also prey on unattended small dogs and cats. Coyotes have an instinctive fear of humans but when people feed them, they can lose that fear and present a human safety risk. The following points can help minimize potential conflicts with coyotes:

- Do not leave small or defenseless children unattended outdoors.
- Do not allow pets to roam free and do not let cats and small dogs out at night without being accompanied by a person.
- Never approach or attempt to touch a coyote.
- Never intentionally feed a coyote and be mindful that bird feeders may attract coyotes.
- Eliminate all outside food sources, especially pet foods and do not leave table scraps or leftovers outside for the wildlife.
- Make trash cans inaccessible.
- Clear out wood and brush piles; they are good habitats for rats and mice, which may attract coyotes.
- Spay or neuter dogs. Coyotes are attracted to and can mate with unspayed or unneutered domestic dogs.

PROGRAM TO CULL THE COYOTE POPULATION

Livonia Animal Control has a program in place to cull the coyote population in our community. Mapping is utilized to track sightings and to assist with the locating of traps. If a coyote is sighted in your area, please contact Livonia Public Service at (734) 466-2655 with the location to assist with this program. Livonia Police should immediately be contacted should any emergency situation arise with a coyote.