

## Living with Wildlife

# Eastern coyotes

### *Tips to avoid attracting coyotes and to handling coyote problems*

The Eastern coyote (*Canis latrans*) has inhabited New Brunswick for more than 50 years and has adapted well to rural and urban environments.

Coyote populations in New Brunswick fluctuate, with an estimated range of 10,000 to 15,000 animals depending on factors such as food supply, disease and social structure.

Coyotes are a member of the canidae family, which includes wolves, foxes and dogs. They are of medium size, ranging from 14 to 20 kilograms (30 to 45 pounds) and stand 50 to 60 centimetres (20 to 24 inches) at the shoulder. They have pointed, erect ears (unlike most domestic dogs), a pointed muzzle with black nose, and yellow slightly slanted eyes.

The coyote's fur is long and soft and well suited to protect it from the cold. It blends in well with the seasonal surroundings. Coloration can vary from black to red-brown to blonde but typically the main body is generally greyish with black-tipped fur, a black-tipped tail and rusty red colouration around the muzzle, back of the ears and legs. White fur is usually found on the throat, belly and the inside of the ears.

They are most active at dusk, dawn and night. They can reach speeds of more than 60 kilometres per hour.

Coyotes may become more visible and active when natural food sources are locally restricted. Snow and lack of leaf cover increase their visibility, and heavy snow can encourage them to travel on roads and packed trails.

Coyotes may form loosely-knit packs consisting of a reproductive female and male, young-of-the-year, and possibly the previous year's young. Unrelated individuals have been known to be accepted into family packs as well.

Coyotes can breed in their first year, but they usually begin in their second year. Females choose a male, and they establish a territory. Pairs may bond for several years. Breeding occurs between January and March, with an average litter of six pups born two months later. Young are weaned at six weeks and may disperse in the fall or winter.

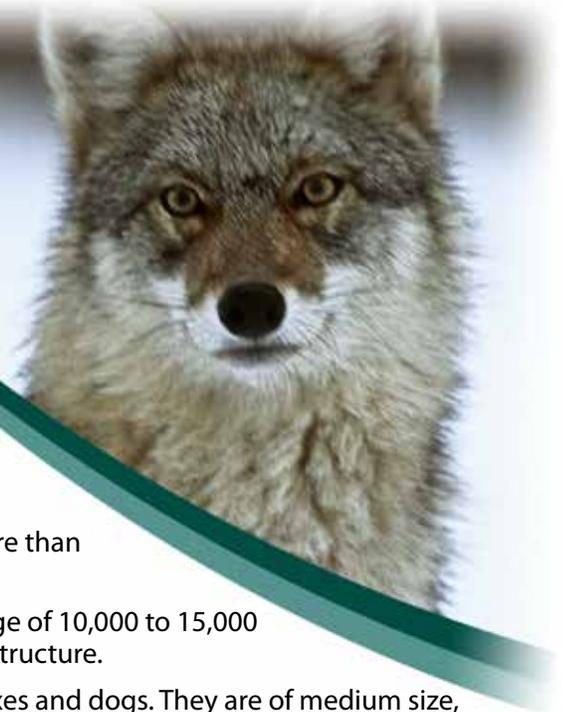
Coyotes have well-developed hearing and smell that can cause them to change course in mid-step. Coyotes are intelligent, curious and, most of all, opportunistic. They are also shy, cautious and usually non-confrontational. They are creatures of habit and will frequent certain areas in search of food.

### **What food attracts coyotes?**

Coyotes are omnivores, and, as scavengers, they eat whatever is available. Their natural diet is comprised of medium-sized animals, small rodents such as mice, rabbits and groundhogs, along with insects and snakes. They eat meat, carrion, fruits and vegetable matter and improperly stored garbage. Coyotes can be serious predators of vulnerable livestock such as sheep and goats, and they may prey on some wildlife populations.

### **How to discourage coyotes from residential areas and avoid negative interactions**

Coyotes have adjusted well to living close to humans. They are generally shy and would prefer to avoid confrontations with people. Coyotes find their way to residential areas, where they may come into conflict with pets, disturb garbage and cause concern for residents. Coyotes do not generally pose a threat to humans, and they play an important role in the ecosystem. It is understandable, however, that residents may have concerns and questions about coyotes in their neighbourhoods.



To co-exist with these animals, we must learn to understand and respect them.

Prevention is the best tool to minimize conflicts with coyotes and other wildlife. Follow these management strategies around your property and encourage your neighbours to do the same:

- **never feed coyotes;**
- **do not give coyotes access to garbage. Garbage should be secured in sealed containers with locking lids;**
- **keep pets indoors. Never let pets roam at large;**
- **feed dogs and cats indoors and keep pet food indoors;**
- **prevent access to fruit and compost. Pick fruit as soon as it ripens. Keep compost in containers that keep coyotes out while allowing for ventilation. Do not compost meat scraps;**
- **do not leave any type of food outdoors; and**
- **close off spaces under porches, decks and sheds.**



Photo: Gary Moore

### **What about the safety of my family?**

The risk of attack and injury from a coyote is extremely low. As mentioned earlier, coyotes have been in New Brunswick for more than 50 years, yet only a few incidents have been recorded.

#### **Tips on if you encounter a coyote:**

- **never approach or touch a coyote. Always give it an escape route;**
- **back away from a coyote and remain calm. Do not turn your back on or run from a coyote;**
- **if the coyote is approaching, respond aggressively: wave your arms, shout, throw rocks or sticks, and maintain eye contact;**
- **carry a flashlight, an audible alarm or whistle at night to scare off coyotes; and**
- **do not let dogs chase a coyote.**

The coyote is classed as a furbearer in New Brunswick and can be hunted year-round. Trapping and snaring season is five months long. Coyotes causing problems on private land may be killed without a hunting licence.

Landowners unable to deal with nuisance coyotes may contract a licensed nuisance wildlife control operator (NWCO), who is authorized to capture and destroy problem coyotes.

A list of licensed NWCOs is at:

[http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/erd/natural\\_resources/content/wildlife/content/NuisanceWildlifeControlOperatorsByRegion.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/erd/natural_resources/content/wildlife/content/NuisanceWildlifeControlOperatorsByRegion.html)

Wild animals have the same basic needs as humans – food, water and shelter. Sometimes, humans will encounter these animals when they are trying to meet their basic needs.

Please remember that all wild animals are “wild” no matter how tame they may appear, and all are a potential hazard, so do not feed them or approach them too closely. Be cautious, show these animals a healthy respect and take steps to prevent and handle human-wildlife conflicts.

Further information about avoiding conflicts with wildlife is available on the Department of Energy and Resource Development’s website at the following links:

[http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/erd/natural\\_resources/content/wildlife/content/NuisanceWildlifeDamagePreventionControl.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/erd/natural_resources/content/wildlife/content/NuisanceWildlifeDamagePreventionControl.html)

<http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/nr-rn/pdf/en/Wildlife/DoNotFeedWildlife.pdf>

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