



Photo: Jim Cruce

Living with Coyotes

At first glance, the coyote looks like a small German shepherd with a shorter, bushier tail. Coyotes are curious but timid animals and will generally run away if challenged. Sightings of coyotes are most common just after sunset and before sunrise. As habitat shrinks, complaints about these highly adaptable creatures increase.

Neither the City of Tigard nor Washington County Animal Control has programs in place for managing urban coyote populations. The Oregon State Department of Fish & Wildlife protects and enforces wildlife laws and habitat. If you have questions or concerns, contact the Oregon State Fish & Wildlife Division at osp.fwd@state.or.us or by phone at 503-378-3720.

Coyotes and Humans

Unless habituated to humans, coyotes are generally shy and wary and present a minimal risk to humans. While coyotes are most active between dusk and dawn, they may be seen at any time of the day. Sightings in and around Portland began in the 1980s and have increased over the past 15 years. Coyotes can also be quite curious and will often observe human activity from what they perceive to be a safe distance.

If a coyote approaches you, wave your arms, throw stones, and shout. The idea is to convince the coyote that you are not prey, but a potential danger.

What Coyotes Eat

Coyotes play an important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems. As a 'top of the food chain' predator species, they play a valuable role in naturally controlling other species, such as rodents.

While their primary diet is made up of small rodents, coyotes are opportunistic and will consume a vast array of foods including birds and insects, fruit and vegetables, human garbage and compost, outdoor pet food and small free-roaming pets.

By providing accessible garbage cans, compost bins, outdoor pet bowls and free-roaming pets, humans have inadvertently promoted urban coyote populations.

Coyotes and Pets

Coyotes are opportunistic and will prey upon free-roaming cats and small dogs. The best prevention is to keep pets under control - either indoors, on a leash or within a fenced yard. Coyotes will protect active dens from predators including other coyotes and dogs.

Realities of Coyote Control

It is illegal to relocate a coyote in the State of Oregon. It is also illegal to hold a coyote in a captive situation in the State of Oregon. The only alternative for coyotes that need to be removed from a specific location is euthanasia.

Coyotes are notoriously difficult to "live trap." They are extremely wary and have a remarkable sense of smell and exceptional senses of sight and hearing. Traps and poisons frequently capture and/or kill domestic animals or wildlife other than coyotes.

While coyote control can be effective in eliminating specific individuals, it will not help reduce local populations. Coyotes have a compensatory, density-dependant breeding rate. Killing coyotes disrupts population structure causing more coyotes to breed and have larger litters. Coyotes will also quickly fill into vacated habitat from adjacent areas. For these reasons, eradication efforts frequently lead to increases in local coyote populations.

Prevention is the best tool for minimizing conflicts with coyotes and other wildlife.

Reducing Human-Coyote Conflicts

- **Never deliberately feed a coyote** or other wild mammal.
- **Securely cover garbage cans** and compost bins.
- **Remove fallen fruit from yards.**
- **Eliminate opportunities for rats** to breed in and around your yard.
- **Never deliberately approach a coyote** and teach children to respect all wildlife from a distance.
- **Never leave small children unattended** where coyotes are frequently seen or heard.
- **Keep house pets indoors** and allow only controlled access to the outdoors (fenced yards and leashes). Always keep pets in from dusk to dawn when coyotes are most active.
- To prevent coyotes from entering your yard consider **removing unnecessary brush**, installing a motion-sensitive lighting system, or installing a coyote proof fence. To be effective fences must be at least six feet tall, have no openings greater than four inches and should extend flush with the ground.
- If you do not want coyotes around your home, **let them know that they are not welcome**. If you see a coyote, shout and make noise, wave your arms.

Information courtesy of the following sources:

Audubon Society of Portland "**Living with Urban Wildlife**" Series | 5151 NW Cornell Road, Portland, OR 97210
general@audubonportland.org

Oregon State Division of Fish & Wildlife "**Living with Wildlife**" *Provided by the ODFW Springfield Field Office*
http://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/living_with/

"**Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest**" Written by: [Russell Link](#) Urban Wildlife Biologist
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living.htm>