

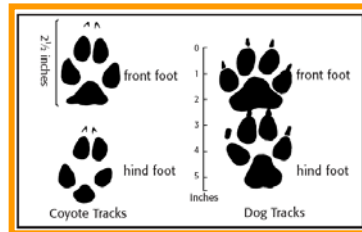


Wildlife NOTES

Living with Urban Coyotes

As residential development expands, suburban areas become more urban and new suburban areas take over wildlife habitat. More and more of us are living in wildlife areas and encountering wild animals. And many of those wild animals have adapted their lifestyles to ours.

Often people live with coyotes nearby and never see them, knowing they are near only when they hear the animal's occasional night choruses



Don't provide food. Feeding coyotes (or other wild animals) teaches them to come to the humans for food, which is a bad idea. Don't attract wild animals by leaving pet food or water outside. If you compost, use enclosed bins and never include meat or fish scraps. Regularly rake areas around bird feeders and keep trash in high-quality containers with tight-fitting lids. For good measure, don't place the cans outside until the morning of collection.

Keep pets inside. Although small rodents comprise a large portion of their diet, coyotes may prey upon cats and small dogs. You can protect your pets by not letting them outdoors unattended, especially at night. Cats in particular should be kept indoors for protection against a whole host of threats including cars, dogs, diseases and other sources of harm which may also include coyotes.

Fence livestock areas. Poultry or hobby livestock can be protected from coyotes with fencing (both structural and electric) and by housing the animals in indoor enclosures each evening. Fences should be at least six feet high with "apron" of at least 18" at ground level, since coyotes are good diggers.

To deter coyotes, you can teach them to stay away by using "hazing" techniques such as running at them yelling and waving your arms, or spraying them with a hose. They are smart animals who quickly learn where they're unwelcome.

Urban coyotes may become bolder, appearing in daylight and sometimes standing their ground when threatened. Under these circumstances, animal control officers should be called. Make yourself look big, and shout. And remember that coyotes are wild animals and should be respected. Don't try to feed them or pet them.

How to Identify Coyote Tracks

Getting children involved in nature projects is not only time well-spent together but also provides the opportunity to pass on your values of care and compassion for all living creatures.

You may never see a coyote in the wild but you may find their tracks. Here's how you can tell if the tracks you see are coyote tracks.

- Coyote tracks front prints are larger than the rear ones. The front paw prints are about 2 1/4" to 2 3/4" long, and about 1 3/4" to 2 3/8" wide. The footpads are smaller in the back prints.
- Check for claw marks. Coyote tracks have claws, but they don't show if the ground is too hard.
- Overall the footprint is oval shaped. If it is round you are tracking something else, perhaps a bobcat.
- If dogs come through the area, compare the tracks to dog paw prints. Coyote tracks will be more oblong, the claws less prominent and overall more compact.

Remember that coyotes are wild animals. Never feed or try to pet one.