

# COYOTES IN MARYLAND

*Canis latrans*

## Description and Range

Coyotes are medium sized, dog-like animals that are originally native to the Midwest. Beginning in the early 20th century, coyotes settled the eastern United States, making their way to Maryland by 1972. Many factors, including the elimination of large predators and the conversion of eastern deciduous forest are thought to have contributed to this range expansion. Coyotes currently occupy all counties in the State of Maryland, with the highest densities existing in the western panhandle.

## Diet and Habitat

Coyotes have an omnivorous diet that varies widely depending upon the availability and season. The bulk of a coyote's diet typically consists of rodents, small mammals and scavenged carcasses, though they will opportunistically consume birds, fruit and vegetation matter. They also predate on fawns and occasionally adult deer, but in most areas they have little to no impact on deer populations. Although coyotes evolved in open prairie environments, their adaptability allows them to utilize virtually all of the habitat that is available to them within the state from marsh to mountains, even suburbs.

## Coyotes and Humans

Although unusual amongst carnivores, coyotes have displayed the ability to co-exist alongside people in large metropolitan areas. Technological developments such as the widespread use of doorbell cameras have revealed coyotes in surprising places, though they have likely inhabited suburban parts of the state undetected for some time. Human residents can take pro-active measures to co-exist with their wild neighbors by refraining from wildlife feeding, keeping domestic animals indoors and respecting wildlife from a safe distance. Virtually all incidences of direct coyote-human conflict can be attributed to animal habituation to human interaction or rare diseased individuals.

## Genetic Past

Eastern coyotes are sometimes referred to in the media as "coywolves." Modern day research shows that eastern coyotes did interbreed with wolves and domestic dogs in their genetic past, but that these encounters only account for a small fraction of the eastern coyote genome today. Coyotes in Maryland are larger than their western counterparts, but are still moderately sized at 30-40 pounds. Variation in the color of their pelage is also thought to be the result of their genetic history.

For assistance in Maryland, call toll-free 1-877-463-6497. U.S. Department Agriculture Wildlife Services operators are available from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except state holidays. For phone numbers outside of Maryland, please call 410-349-8055.



Photo credit:  
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