

COYOTE FACTS & FICTION



FICTION: Trapped animals are relocated and released. **FACT:** People who hire trappers seldom ask what is done with the animal afterwards because they don't really want to know. Trappers very often have deceptive names for themselves, such as "relocator." The truth is that it is illegal to relocate trapped coyotes. They must be killed. Very often they are skinned and their pelts are sold, or they are sold as "bait" to penning facilities for dog attack entertainment, and they are sold to fox-hunting "preserves" where the hunting dogs in training chase and kill the coyotes although they are supposed to be "places of refuge" for the coyotes or foxes to get away.

FICTION: The US is one of the most progressive countries when it comes to animal rights. **FACT:** In 1991, the European Union adopted Regulation 3254/91 which bans the use of leg-hold traps and also bans the import of furs from countries which allow leg-hold traps. So, the EU rejected the use of leg-hold traps over 20 years ago, whereas they are still allowed in many parts of the United States.

FICTION: A coyote seen in a public area on a path is aggressive. **FACT:** Coyotes, the same as humans, use "paths of least resistance" for getting around. Seeing a coyote in a public area does not mean that the coyote is aggressive.

FICTION: Coyotes have moved into the neighborhoods specifically to take advantage of the abundance of pets. **FACT:** Coyotes cannot distinguish between your pet or any other small critter which he is programmed naturally to see as prey. How would they know the difference? Humans need to protect their pets from mishaps involving other humans, cars, other dogs, and wildlife, just as they would do for their children. In studies of the diet of urban coyotes only a bare 1% was related to cats.

FICTION: Feeding makes coyotes aggressive. **FACT:** There is a progression that may lead to more aggressiveness in coyotes. This is why it is important never to feed a coyote. The progression begins with a human offering a coyote food. After having food offered a number of times, a coyote may come to expect food, even approaching the individual doing the feeding. When a coyote, then, gets hungry enough, it may DEMAND the food and do so aggressively from anybody. This is the progression we are trying to eliminate by not feeding coyotes in the first place.

FICTION: The coyote population in an area should be culled to keep their numbers down since they have no predators except humans in most areas. **FACT:** Killing coyotes actually results in an INCREASE in their numbers due to some interesting coyote biological and social factors. Coyote alphas are the only ones which breed in an area. When the alpha is killed, all the other female coyotes end up producing litters. Also, with the population of coyotes down, the mothers are able to eat more which, in turn, allows them to produce more milk for their young so that more of them survive into adulthood. Killing coyotes to cull them does not work.

FICTION: If a coyote looks at you, he is displaying aggression and challenging you. **FACT:** Coyotes, like humans, look at what is around in their environment. A coyote looking at you is doing nothing more than that.

FICTION: Coyotes are nocturnal and "should not" be seen during daylight hours. **FACT:** Coyotes are opportunistic critters, meaning that they will be up and about when it is safest for them. Although they might be out at twilight and nighttime -- that is predominantly when they do their hunting -- they may be seen at any time of day, including noontime and in broad daylight. It is not abnormal coyote behavior when they are out at that time.

FICTION: "I saw a 100-pound coyote." **FACT:** most eastern coyotes weight between 35-45 pounds, with a few reaching 50 pounds. In wintertime, a coyote may look larger because of it's thick and long winter coat, which reaches between 2" and 4" in length.

FICTION: "I heard 25 coyotes in the park -- they're taking over." **FACT:** Coyotes, with their howls, yips, whining and tremolos are known to sound like there are many more than there actually are: one coyote could sound like 2, two coyotes sound like 7 or 9, and three coyotes can sound like a community meeting of coyotes.

FICTION: Coyotes howl when they've made a killing. **FACT:** Coyotes vocalize for many, many reasons, including greeting each other, responding to sirens, when they've been chased or surprised by a dog, communicating with distance coyotes about where they are and their situation, just for fun!

FICTION: Most coyotes have rabies. **FACT:** The incidence of rabies in coyotes is very low -- of all rabies cases reported in 2010, less than .2% were coyotes.