

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Look for it now in southwest Ohio!

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Photos by Dave Woehr. The white coyote is a taxidermy specimen that can be viewed at the Caesar Creek State Park Visitor Center.

Coyote (*Canis Latrans*)

By Dave Woehr, Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist

Coyotes are wild, indigenous, long-legged, long-eared members of the dog family weighing 20 to 50 pounds. They have yellow eyes and a mouthful of sharp teeth. Their fur can vary in color from brown to gray to black to white or even be a mixture of those shades.

Although the coyote is quite common in Ohio today, the first pioneers to settle in Ohio did not encounter this species. The original range of the coyote was the desert southwest and the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The westward migration of frontiersmen and the establishment of settlements began to crowd the coyote out of its traditional habitat. Seeking new living space, the coyotes gradually began an eastward movement into parts of America that were once heavily forested, but had become more open as farms, roads and cities altered the prehistoric landscape. Being a very resourceful and adaptive animal, coyotes have now established a presence in all of our states except Hawaii.

The coyote is somewhat larger than Ohio's other canines, the red and gray foxes. As coyote populations have increased, fox populations have declined. Coyotes are not only found in Ohio's farmlands, but also in Ohio's cities where they have learned to live almost in secret and out of our eyesight most of the time. They may live in creekside dens, abandoned buildings, brush piles, and wood piles. They are omnivorous, eating meat, fruit, pet food, garbage, rodents, small game, and song birds. They like privacy and usually avoid human contact. Occasionally an aggressive one needs to be shooed away by loud shouting at it or tossing sticks or stones in its direction.

February is the peak breeding time of the year for coyotes and may be the best time to see one during the day or to hear one howling at night. Up to a dozen pups are born in the early spring. When weaned from their mother's milk, the parents will teach their young to eat fresh meat brought to the den. Later the pups will be taught to hunt on their own.

To learn more about this species, visit "[A Coyote Is in Your Backyard. What Should You Do?](#)" on the Ohio Department of Natural Resources website.



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