



LIVING WITH COYOTES

Why They're Here and What Can Be Done

A very smart and adaptable animal, these natives of Southern Nevada inhabit most of North America, thriving in both rural and urban environments. Acting as a **keystone species** within the Mojave Desert, coyotes are an invaluable asset to a city surrounded by undeveloped land by helping to keep small mammal populations in check.

Coyotes are instinctually fearful of humans and most avoid being in close proximity to us and our neighborhoods. There are, however, those that represent a very small percentage of the total population within any given region that can be found in residential areas. This is partly due to a critical process undergone by humans and animals called habituation, meaning urban coyotes have unconsciously developed increased comfort levels to human presence. Beyond comfort, but actually seeking out and approaching humans is a result of food conditioning. This occurs when animals have been directly



or indirectly fed by people. Habituation and food conditioning can be seen in other animals throughout the valley, such as pigeons on sidewalks or neighborhoods, as well as some ducks and geese in parks and golf courses. When any number of humans are seen on a daily basis, in which little to no threat was posed to the animal, they stop responding to the stimuli in a threatened way or with the same intensity as the first encounter, especially when fed. Wild animals are fully capable of feeding themselves; they do not need help.

Another reason coyotes can be found within communities are parks and golf courses, which provide excellent habitat for small mammals like rodents and rabbits. When water, food, and an overall more

hospitable area is located in the middle of the Mojave Desert, naturally, many animals will be drawn in—predator and prey alike. This occurs naturally in deserts in the form of an oasis, which animals will rely heavily upon where found.

Water may be of more significance in a desert than anywhere else, so it should come as no surprise that coyotes, like many other species, seek out areas near water. Water, prey species, and thicker vegetation provide a perfect habitat for coyotes. There are several options for water throughout the valley such as golf courses, parks, washes, swimming pools, and even irrigation lines.

Coyotes that frequent residential areas can be evidence of an identified food source or



Coyote Facts

Adult Weight: 25 – 30 pounds

Lifespan: average 6-8 years

Speed: up to 40 mph

Breeding Season: January-March

Social Animals: Born into pack, it may leave during adolescence or stay with parents—if it leaves, it will likely form its own pack.

Keystone Species: A plant or animal that plays a vital role in maintaining health and balance within its environment. Without it, the ecosystem can change or cease to function properly

defense of territory. Dogs, cats, chickens, or any other animal you may have in your backyard are at risk if not adequately protected. Dogs and cats that are fed outside can also attract other forms of wildlife. It is essential to ensure pets safety by keeping them indoors at night. This is especially important in neighborhoods that are near or border undeveloped land, where a higher rate of wildlife encounters occur.

Hazing, or harassment, is one of the most effective ways to keep coyotes from entering your yard or neighborhood. In much of the animal world, territory is established through intimidation or physical power. Hazing can help to establish areas as our territory, as well as our pets, sending the message that animal intruders are not welcomed. Much like training a pet, timing is a critical aspect, so hazing must be carried out the moment the animal is seen.

Hazing can be combining loud authoritative voices, looking as big as possible, throwing objects in it's direction, or approaching the animal until a reasonable retreat has occurred. Canned air horns make great hazing tools. NEVER run away from or corner a wild animal! Predators large and small will instinctually chase anything running away from them — stand your ground, but if you must leave, walk away while still facing the coyote. If pets are present, pick up small animals and control large ones. The coyote should focus on the human that is hazing it, not the pet. Do not leave pets outside or allow them access through dog doors after dark, as a majority of coyote-pet interactions occur while we're sleeping. The sooner the issue is addressed, the easier it is to keep them away. Coyotes can be more defensive if they have young around, so use caution if a den site is suspected in the area. If there is a den nearby, they may follow after you to ensure you get to a safe distance away from their young.

Coyote removal is only a temporary fix. If the reasons coyotes or any predators are attracted to an area are not addressed, such as an abundance or easily accessed prey, others will fill the void.