

# Facts about Coyotes

- The coyote was first observed in New York in 1925.
- The average weight of an adult coyote is around 35 lbs.
- A coyote's territory can be up to 25 square miles.
- Breeding occurs in February and pups are born in April and May.
- Some scientists think coyotes may have taken over the territories of wolves that were pushed out of the region.
- Coyotes generally do not form packs.
- Social groups usually consist of a breeding pair and their offspring.
- Young coyotes are very vocal. What sounds like a large pack may be only a single family unit.
- Diet or past hybridizations with gray wolves may explain why Eastern coyotes are approximately 20% bigger than their Western cousins.

Coyotes will eat just about anything, including fruits, small mammals, deer and garbage.

# Finding the Answers

Local organizations and universities are conducting research to better understand and address issues related to the emergence of the coyote in our area.




**For more information:**  
Westchester County Parks  
call (914) 864-7326, or visit our website at [parks.westchestercountyny.gov](http://parks.westchestercountyny.gov)

The content of this brochure was adapted from *Coyotes: Changing How We Look at Westchester's Newest Predators*, a publication of the Mianus River Gorge Preserve.

A close-up photograph of a coyote's face, looking directly at the camera. The background is a blurred green, suggesting a natural habitat.

# COYOTES

Living with Westchester's newest predator



# Eastern Coyote

You may have walked our local parks many times without ever knowing you were in the presence of an Eastern coyote (*Canis latrans*). Few people have caught a glimpse of these magnificent creatures that number 20,000 strong in New York State, but chances are they've seen you.

The coyote, a relative new comer in this area, has emerged as a top predator in many northeast communities, with consequences that we are just now beginning to explore.



## Questions

### 1. Can coyotes help reduce the number of deer in Westchester?

Many people have welcomed coyotes as nature's solution to the problem of growing white-tailed deer populations. With the loss of wolves and decreasing numbers of people who hunt, there are about five times more deer than local forests can support. With too many deer, forest regeneration slows, native wildflowers disappear, populations of ground-nesting birds plummet and invasive plants flourish.

### 2. How interdependent are deer and coyote populations?

Wildlife researchers are trying to determine if Eastern coyotes 1) hunt healthy deer that would otherwise live to reproduce, 2) prey on sick, weakened individuals, or 3) scavenge. Coyotes would need to prey on healthy deer in order to thin the population. It may be that coyotes can not fix the problem on their own; however, if people could reduce the deer population, coyotes could perhaps maintain the work that humans began.

### 3. Is it safe for people and pets to live near coyotes?

Coyote attacks on humans are exceedingly rare. You are far more likely to be attacked by a dog. Small pets, such as cats, may be at some risk as coyotes view them as prey. Since dogs and coyotes are closely related, they will both protect their territories. Coyotes do not see your dog as prey, but as a competitor. Each sees the other as a threat.

## Tips

### when in the park

- Stay on the trails.
- Keep your pet leashed at all times.
- If you encounter a coyote, yell, wave your arms and throw rocks or sticks; make yourself appear as big and scary as you can.

### protecting your pets at home

Here are a few common-sense pointers to help keep your pet out of harm's way. Remember, a coyote's actions aren't malicious, but based on its instincts for survival.

- Keep small pets indoors at night.
- Do not leave small pets unattended outside.
- Cover your garbage cans tightly.
- Don't feed your dog or cat outside.
- Clean up around your bird feeders.
- Make sure your pet does not explore the woods alone.
- Anchor your yard fence into the ground to prevent coyotes from digging underneath.

