



Oregon Sea Grant Extension  
Sustainable Tourism &  
Outdoor Recreation Program

# Interpretative Fact Sheet Coyote (*Canis latrans*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

**Come visit us!**

**Tourism and Business Development College of Business,  
Oregon State University Extension - Oregon Sea Grant at**

<http://tourism.oregonstate.edu/>

**Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional Program**

<https://www.GORPguide.org>

**For more information about the GORP training program see:**

<https://www.gorpguide.org/become-a-gorp-certified-guide>

# Coyote (*Canis latrans*)

---

 [tourism.oregonstate.edu/coyote-canis-latrans/](https://tourism.oregonstate.edu/coyote-canis-latrans/)

By colliiek2

September 9, 2020

**Where did you first learn about coyotes?** It may have been through children's cartoons. The characters 'Wile E. Coyote' and the 'Road Runner' cartoons recreated the relationship between predators in a humorous way. Unfortunately, the representation is not very accurate.

Coyotes are North America's oldest indigenous species. The oldest modern coyote fossils date to 0.74–0.85 Ma (million years) and can be found in Hamilton Cave, West Virginia. Coyotes are thought to have originated near Yellowstone three million years ago!



Coyote (photo courtesy of ODFW)

## Habitat

---

**Coyotes are found throughout Oregon.** Their territory stretches south to Central America and north through much of Canada.

There are 19 different subspecies of coyotes inhabiting different areas. They look similar in that they are medium in size with multi-colored coat, and bushy tail.

Coyotes are part of the Canidae family which include wolves (typically larger) and foxes (typically smaller). These three species avoid using the same territory at the same time.

## Conflicts

---

**As populations flourish,** are they a nuisance? Conflicts between humans and coyotes usually occur as a result of human errors, often related to making food available. And, because of the cartoon, we all know that the coyote is always hungry and looking for its next meal.

See Living with Coyotes fact sheet from the Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (link in References).

## Diet

---

Coyotes will eat just about anything and will shift their diet seasonally and based on availability. If they have to eat grasshoppers to survive, they will. On better days they will be looking for mammals (such as rabbits, porcupines, rodents, squirrels, deer, goat, mice,

etc.), fish, amphibians, , and reptiles, fruit and vegetables, and in times of food shortages invertebrates (like grasshoppers), farm animals (like chickens) and even pets. Coyotes also hunt in packs, usually for larger prey.

## Communication

---

**Unlike the cartoon, coyotes are intelligent and adaptable**, and use a highly developed communication system to maintain long-term social and family relationships, and identify territory. Coyotes are considered to be the most vocal of all [wild] North American mammals.

Their howl, or group howls, are easily recognizable. They will also vocalize greetings, which can include a group yip howl. Sounds can also include agonistic/alarm, and contact which may be made through woofs, growls, huffs, barks, yelps, and high frequency whines. Yelps are a sign of submission.

Vocalizations are also important, and often heard, during breeding season (generally between late January and March). Coyotes form strong pair bonds for several years and are generally monogamous.

These vocalizations always include some body language such as tail wagging, muzzle nibbling, and posture. An aggressive coyote will arch its back and lower its tail, head moving side to side, with spins and dives. Aggression is a normal behavior in a pack and fights are often silent.

## Folklore

---

Native American folklore contains many references to coyotes. Coyotes may take the form of a trickster, skin walker, or in military/hero symbols, often as savvy and cunning. In Mesoamerica, the Coyote appears in several codices as the god of dance, music and carnality (sometimes as a womanizer). The Coyote also has parts in many creation stories from several native cultures.

**Coyotes are an evolutionary success story.** Their cunning, adaptability, communications, and ability to understand human behavior makes them stand out both in folklore and in modern times.

### REFERENCES:

- Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (<https://myodfw.com/wildlife-viewing/species/coyotes-wolves-and-foxes>,  
[https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/living\\_with/coyotes.asp](https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/living_with/coyotes.asp))
- National Geographic (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/c/coyote/>)
- Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coyote>,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fast\\_and\\_Furry-ous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fast_and_Furry-ous))

–The Howling: Why You’re Hearing Coyotes This Month

(<https://blog.nature.org/science/2019/02/13/the-howling-why-youre-hearing-coyotes-this-month/>)

–Singing Coyote – the Ultimate Adapter (<http://followingdeercreek.com/coyote/>)