

Coyotes in Mississauga

The coyote has adapted very well to life in Mississauga. They are able to live in close proximity with their human neighbours even though we are known to be a natural predator. The park-like valleys of the rivers which flow into Lake Ontario provide excellent habitat.

Coyotes can travel great distances in the City using rail lines, hydro corridors, highway thoroughfares, river ravines and naturalized areas. Travelling these routes affords them both privacy and easy access into residential areas.

Coyotes have been present in Ontario for over 200 years and prevalent in Mississauga for more than 20 years. In Ontario they are known as the Eastern Coyote, they are taller than their western cousins but on average weigh less than 40lbs or 18kgs. In the wild a coyote may live 14 years, in cities the average coyote lives 5 or 6 years as they are often injured or hit by cars.

Coyotes mate for life and the pups are born in April or May. Both parents share the pup raising duties and teach the pups how to hunt. This family unit would constitute the small packs which are often seen in the City. Coyotes disperse the pups each year, however they may remain a family unit or as a group of siblings until the following breeding season.

Coyotes are omnivores and will eat almost anything but their main diet consists of voles, mice, rats and rabbits. In an urban area coyotes also feed on garbage, compost, fallen fruit, pet food and birdseed. They will also prey on outdoor pets if they are left unattended or off leash.

Coyotes are active both day and night but prefers to hunt under the cover of dawn or dusk. Coyotes vocalize in a variety of ways, they howl to alert the others of danger, establish territory or to let the others know where they are. In the summer months pups are often heard howling in a chorus attempting to mimic their parents. Several coyotes howling can sound like 20 coyotes howling.

Coyotes do not usually cause problems for humans as they are naturally shy and non-confrontational. Coyotes are also very intelligent and curious and will sometimes watch or follow humans while they go about their daily activities. This behaviour is known as *shadowing* and although it is normal behaviour for coyotes it can be very disconcerting to a human.

Many people ask why coyotes cannot be trapped and re-located. Coyotes are extremely intelligent and almost impossible to live trap. Subsequently, licensed trappers employ the use of leg hold traps and snares to catch a coyote. This is not a suitable option due to the danger these traps pose to pets and humans.

The Ontario Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act which regulates hunting and wildlife also prohibits the re-location of wildlife from home territories, subsequently trapped animals must be released in their home territory or destroyed. Even if it was possible to humanely trap and re-locate a coyote, wildlife experts agree that a relocated coyote is likely to starve or be killed by established coyote populations.

Coyotes have been actively hunted and persecuted in North America for over 200 years yet they have managed to increase both their range and their numbers. Wildlife authorities are telling us that coyotes are here to stay and we must learn to live with them. The good news is that a peaceful coexistence is possible. By taking a few preventative and common sense measures we can discourage coyotes from our residential areas, avoid negative interactions and protect our pets.



Photo Courtesy of Kevin Golden, Mississauga Resident

TIPS TO AVOID COYOTE CONFLICTS

The City of Mississauga encourages residents to enjoy and live in harmony with our native wildlife. This can only be accomplished if we do not interfere with a wild animal's natural instincts, behaviours and ability to forage for food.

NEVER FEED A COYOTE AS THIS WILL CAUSE COYOTES TO LOSE THEIR FEAR OF HUMANS Educate and/or report person's leaving food or attractants outdoors, particularly important if you notice coyotes in your area.

It is currently an offence to feed wildlife in the City of Mississauga as per the Animal Care and Control By-law 0098-04, Part IV. Section 10 No person shall intentionally feed a wild animal or leave food or attractants of any type or in any form out of doors in such a manner as to attract, or be accessible by a wild animal, feral or stray domestic animal on private or public property. (242-11)

PROTECTING YOUR PROPERTY

- Store garbage indoors until collection day
- Secure garbage and compost in durable plastic or steel containers with locking lids
- Remove bird feeders and seed spillage that attracts rodents and their predators
- Feed pets indoors
- Clean BBQ grills and tools after each use
- Trim shrubs and remove rodent habitats such as rock piles or wood piles from your yard
- Wildlife proof gardens, pick ripened fruit and clean up windfalls
- Install motion sensor lights or sprinklers
- Install a 6' solid fence and extend with mesh underground to prevent burrowing
- Install coyote rollers on fencing
- Enclose crawl spaces beneath decks and sheds

PROTECTING YOUR PETS

- Keep cats Indoors
- Keep dogs on a short 5' leash
- Do not allow your dog to chase wildlife
- Check your property for wildlife before letting your pet outside
- After dark or at dusk take your pet out on a short leash
- Do not house rabbits, fowl or other pets outdoors
- Vaccinate your pet against rabies
- Follow property tips

PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY

- Never Leave Young Children Unattended
- Teach children not to approach or harass wildlife or pets
- Avoid Walking Alone in Areas with Coyotes
- Avoid Walking at Dusk and Dawn or after Dark
- Carry Protection - Personal Alarm, Umbrella, Flash light, Cell Phone

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A COYOTE

- Stay calm and wait until they move away
- Do not turn your back or run. (Like dogs, coyotes are hardwired to give chase if you run)
- If approached, stand tall, waive your arms, make yourself as large as you can. Clap, yell, shout loudly, make startling movements, throw an object towards the animal. (Coyotes are hardwired to avoid scary situations or aggressive behaviour)
- Startle the animal by opening an umbrella, using a flashlight, activating an audible alarm.

TO REPORT SICK OR INJURED ANIMALS, UNUSUAL ACTIVITY OR THE FEEDING OF WILDLIFE CALL ANIMAL SERVICES AT: Weekdays: 905-896-5858 OR 311 Evenings, Weekends and Holidays: 905-615-3000

IN CASE OF A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY CALL 911

This information is provided by the City of Mississauga Animal Services
To learn more about coyotes visit www.mypetmississauga.ca