

Are coyotes dangerous?

Coyotes are generally not dangerous to hikers. Humans have had a mostly peaceful relationship with coyotes for the past 100 years in New Jersey. In the past 10 years, there have been very few reported attacks on people in New Jersey.

Can we get rid of them?

Populations may fluctuate but coyotes came to New Jersey naturally and live in every county; it would be impossible to eliminate them. They have adapted to neighborhoods because our environment supports them. Eradication programs in North America have proven to be expensive failures. Relocated coyotes have been known to run in a straight line for miles, searching for familiar territory. Locations of food, water and shelter are unknown to them in a release area. They are shunned by territorial coyotes and after release, many are killed on unfamiliar roads. Even if coyotes, were eradicated from New Jersey or hunted to extinction, there are often unforeseen negative consequences to our ecosystems.

They have adapted to our presence and some have lost their natural fear of us. It is imperative that communities work together to instill the healthy and natural fear of humans back into all coyotes for their health and safety and ours. Coyotes are quick learners, and consistent negative experiences can teach them to avoid people.

What can I do to make my property less attractive to coyotes?

1. Keep all garbage and compost containers closed and inaccessible. Adding ammonia or pepper spray to trash can discourage rummaging by all wildlife.
2. Seal crawl spaces and secure bins.
3. Don't feed wildlife or cats outdoors. Coyotes may feed on pet food and also prey on cats.
4. Install motion-detecting lighting around your house.
5. Remove sources of water.
6. Bring pets in at night and keep dogs on a leash.
7. Put away bird feeders at night to avoid attracting wildlife.
8. Remove debris and brush piles that would invite habitat for prey. Keep shrubs and flower beds manicured to keep rabbit populations low.

How can you protect your pet?

It can be difficult to accept, but pets can be seen as a food source, threat or possible mate. Coyotes have taken pets from backyards, open spaces and even right off the leash. Keep pet vaccinations current. Vaccinations and reduce the risk to your pet by following these guidelines:

Cat Owners:

TNC recommends against allowing cats outdoors. The only way to guarantee your cat's safety is to keep it indoors. Outdoor cats face potential death from cars, diseases, foxes, parasites, raccoons, dogs and birds of prey. Protect your cat and other wildlife.

Dog Owners:

- Always supervise your pet outside, especially at dawn and dusk
- Keep your dog on a short leash while recreating and avoid retractable leashes
- Don't allow your dog to interact with a coyote
- If possible, pick up your dog when coyotes are visible
- Avoid known or potential den sites and thick vegetation
- Like domestic dogs, coyotes will defend their territory and their young
- If you must leave your dog outside, secure it in a fully enclosed kennel.

The DEP reports an average of two dogs per year are attacked by coyotes in New Jersey. Attacks on dogs are not an indication that people are at risk, because coyotes do not view people, as a food source.

When are coyotes a risk to you?

Although curious, coyotes are naturally afraid of people; this is healthy for humans and coyotes. A coyote should be a timid animal and normally will run away if confronted.

Coyote attacks on humans are rare and in many cases these attacks occur as a result of people feeding coyotes. Coyotes have adequate food supplies and are capable of surviving. A coyote that associates humans with food may become demanding and aggressive. A coyote that bites a person must be destroyed. By feeding coyotes you put yourself, the neighborhood and coyotes at risk.

What you can do

You have options when it comes to dealing with coyotes in your neighborhood:

- **Do nothing.**
You might have no concerns about coyotes, however, we recommend you understand the possible risks to your pets and yourself.
- **Be prepared and encourage coyotes to remain wild.**
Help both people and coyotes by taking action to instill them with a healthy and natural fear of people. If you have concerns about encountering a coyote, you may want to keep a deterrent handy. Deterrents can include rocks, pots and pans, vinegar in a water gun, paintballs, air horns or a repellent spray. Contact local authorities to ensure that you are using a legal method.
- **Take steps to prevent conflict.**
Follow the advice in this brochure to eliminate attractants around your property and safeguard your pet.
 - * Raise your arms and be as big and loud as possible
 - * Wave your arms, stomp, clap, yell, honk an air horn, spray water from a hose, or throw small rocks or sticks when you see a coyote
 - * Shout in a loud and authoritative voice
 - * Back away slowly. Do not run (prey behavior) or turn your back on the coyote
 - * Face the coyote but don't try to stare a coyote down (antagonizing behavior).

Teach your children

- * Never approach unfamiliar animals or dogs!
- * If a coyote approaches you, wave your arms, stomp your feet and tell it loudly to **Go away!**
- * Call for help
- * If the animal doesn't leave, walk out of the area, keeping the animal in your sight
- **Encourage coyotes to remain wild.**
If you observe a coyote during the day that shows no fear of humans, or if a coyote attacks a person, immediately contact your local police and the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife at 908-735-8793. Outside of normal business hours, call the DEP Hotline at 877-WARN-DEP.

Eastern Coyote FAQ



Your Guide to Avoiding Human/Coyote Conflicts

The Tenafly Nature Center is a non-profit independent member-supported nature preserve. Our mission is to protect almost 400 wooded acres, all of its inhabitants and teach the next generations to do the same.

If you have any additional questions, please to contact the Tenafly Nature Center at (201) 568-6093 or info@tenaflynyc.org



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Why are they here?

While coyotes are found throughout Northeastern woodlands, they are extremely adaptable and can also thrive in urban areas. They can and will be found in any neighborhood that provides their basic needs of food, water, shelter and space.



Make coyotes feel uncomfortable around you, your kids, your home or your pets. Teach them a healthy fear of humans.

Residential areas like Tenafly can provide excellent habitat for coyotes. With plentiful food sources, such as mice and rabbits. These small animals feed on birdseed, berries and garbage, which are commonly found and easily accessible. Shelter and water can be found in landscaped parks and yards. Space is plentiful throughout parks and natural areas. As coyotes adapt to the presence of humans, they can lose their natural fear.

What do coyotes look like?

Eastern Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) have wide, pointed ears; a long, thin snout; and weigh 30-50 lbs. They have a bottle brush-like tail, long-legged appearance, and look similar to German Shepherds. Unlike dogs, their tails stay down when walking or running. Their fur color varies from light (gray or red) to brown and black.

General coyote facts

- Have very good hearing and excellent eyesight.
- They are strong swimmers and can run >40 miles/hour.
- In the wild they can live up to 10 years.
- Reproduce at the age of 2 with an average of 6 pups. A pup is fully grown at one year.
- Their home range in NJ, where habitat is favorable, typically averages 2,000 acres with approximately one coyote per 250 acres. An area of 2,000 acres can support eight coyotes, or one family group.
- They are solitary hunters and opportunistic omnivores.

What do coyotes eat?

Coyotes are opportunistic mammals. Up to 70% of a coyotes diet consists of small mammals (mice, rabbits, rats, squirrels, voles, etc.). The remaining 30% is a combination of fruits, vegetables, insects, fish, birds, eggs and other available items. In urban areas, coyotes also prey on rats, squirrels, garbage, fallen fruit/berries from trees, carrion and small pets.

When are coyotes most active?

Coyotes can be active any time, day or night, but are especially active at dawn and dusk. Conflicts with pets occur year-round and are more likely to occur during the breeding season (February-March). Because young are born in the spring, food requirements of the nursing females and growing young remain high until late summer. As people and their pets spend more time outdoors during this time, the possibility of a coyote encounter increases.

If you see a coyote roaming during the day does that mean its rabid?

There can be many reasons why a coyote may be seen during the day. Generally nocturnal, coyotes sometimes forage during the day, so appearing during the day does not necessarily indicate rabies. Of course, if a coyote bites or scratches you, contact a doctor immediately, as well as the DEP.

What are coyotes good for?

Coyotes are beneficial to the environment and to people. As a top predator in our natural ecosystem, they help control small mammal and deer populations. This benefits people since rodents and deer can carry ticks with Lyme disease, so in this sense coyotes help to reduce the spread of the disease.

How many coyotes live at TNC?

Coyotes have been spotted and heard at TNC on occasion. However, the Tenafly Nature Center is much too small to fully support the roaming and dining habits of coyote year round. A number of coyotes do pass through the nature center, as well as through other back yards and neighborhoods in the area.

How do coyotes and foxes differ?

People sometimes mistake a fox for a coyote, but they have distinct physical differences.

1. Coyotes are larger. Coyotes range in length from 32-37", weigh 15-46 pounds while foxes are 18-34" and weigh 6-24 pounds.
2. Foxes have a coat that varies in color from, reddish-brown, golden, silver, and black.
3. Coyote tails remain down when walking and running. Fox tails are nearly their body length and are often held straight out and level with the spine. Red Fox tails have a white tip, Gray Fox tails have a black tip.
4. Fox calls are usually single, repeated, and throaty in sound. They lack the chaotic complexity and social nature of the coyote yip-howl.



How do coyotes and wolves differ?

Coyotes resemble wolves, but wolves and coyotes have distinct differences. Most importantly, *there are no wolves in New Jersey.*

1. Wolves are larger.
2. Coyotes have bushier tails, and often hold them low to the ground.
3. Wolves hunt in packs, while coyotes hunt primarily in pairs.
4. Coyotes are more adaptable to human altered environments than wolves.



Wolves' calls are termed howls. Coyotes' are described as howls, yelps, and yips depending on the rise and fall of the note.

Why aren't there wolves in NJ?

In early colonial times, wolves were perceived as a threat to the lives and livelihood of the colonists. In the 1600's settlers in the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies hunted and trapped the Gray Wolf until they disappeared

from most of the United States. Hunting, trapping, and the westward expansion of settlers in the 1800's and early 1900's led directly to the near extinction of many large predators such as Lynx, Eastern Cougars, and in particular, wolves. Until about the mid-1850's there were Gray Wolves in New Jersey. Today they are listed as Endangered and wolves no longer live in New Jersey outside of zoos. They are an extirpated species, meaning they are locally extinct and have been for the past 100 years in the Northeast. Coyotes have adapted and are now filling the void wolves have left in the food chain.



Only recently have public views changed as people have become increasingly interested in wilderness preservation and the conservation and restoration of wildlife species historically found in these areas.

Where did the coyotes come from?

Coyotes are native and live throughout most of North America. However, coyotes weren't found in New Jersey before the mid-twentieth century. Pre-1700 their range was restricted to the prairies and desert areas of Mexico and central North America.

In New Jersey their numbers have grown, making them more noticeable within the past fifty years. There are several theories why coyotes are now found here in New Jersey. DNA sampling shows that within the last century the western coyote moved through from the mid-western, Great Lake states and lower Canada. During this expansion some coyotes mated with gray wolves and moved eastward and down into the Mid-Atlantic States.

