

# URBAN COYOTES



*Photo: Jared Hughey*


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# What do we need to know about coyotes?

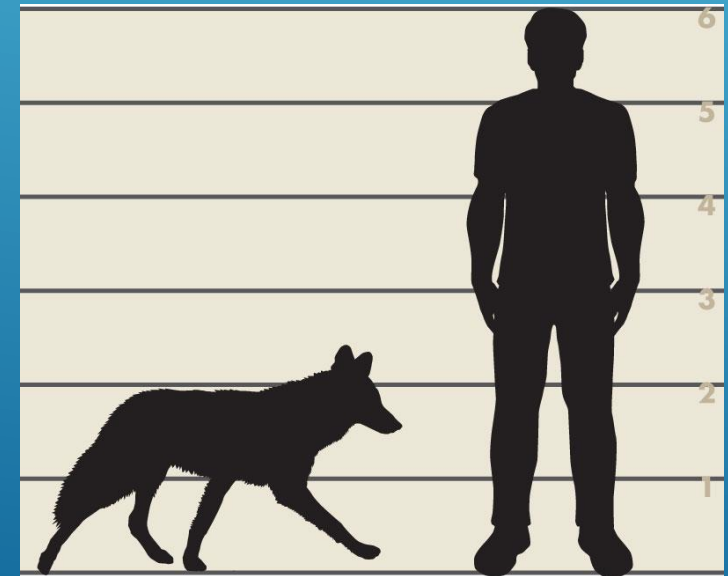
- ▶ Coyote basics
    - ▶ Life Needs
    - ▶ Ecology
    - ▶ Behavior
    - ▶ Home Range
    - ▶ Seasons
  - ▶ Coyotes – What can we do about them?
    - ▶ Failed and ineffective actions
    - ▶ Effective actions
- 
- A decorative graphic consisting of several parallel white lines of varying lengths, slanted diagonally from the bottom right towards the top right, set against a blue gradient background.

# Why are coyotes coming into the City?

- ▶ Coyotes are very intelligent and adaptable animals
- ▶ They need 3 things to survive:
  - ▶ 1) \*Food
  - ▶ 2) Water
  - ▶ 3) Shelter
- ▶ Coyotes are finding these 3 things in neighborhoods and cities
- ▶ They are accustomed to living around people (not fearful of humans) and are being fed
- ▶ Canada Geese, wild turkey, raccoons etc.

# COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) FACTS

- ▶ Coyotes are a part of Illinois native ecosystem
- ▶ Coyotes typically weigh 20-40 pounds
- ▶ Small mammals (mice, voles, rabbits, ground squirrels) are the primary prey items for coyotes
- ▶ Coyote **breeding season** runs mid January – March
- ▶ Average life span is ~3 years for urban coyotes
- ▶ Home range can be 2 – 10 miles
- ▶ Core area within a home range is much smaller

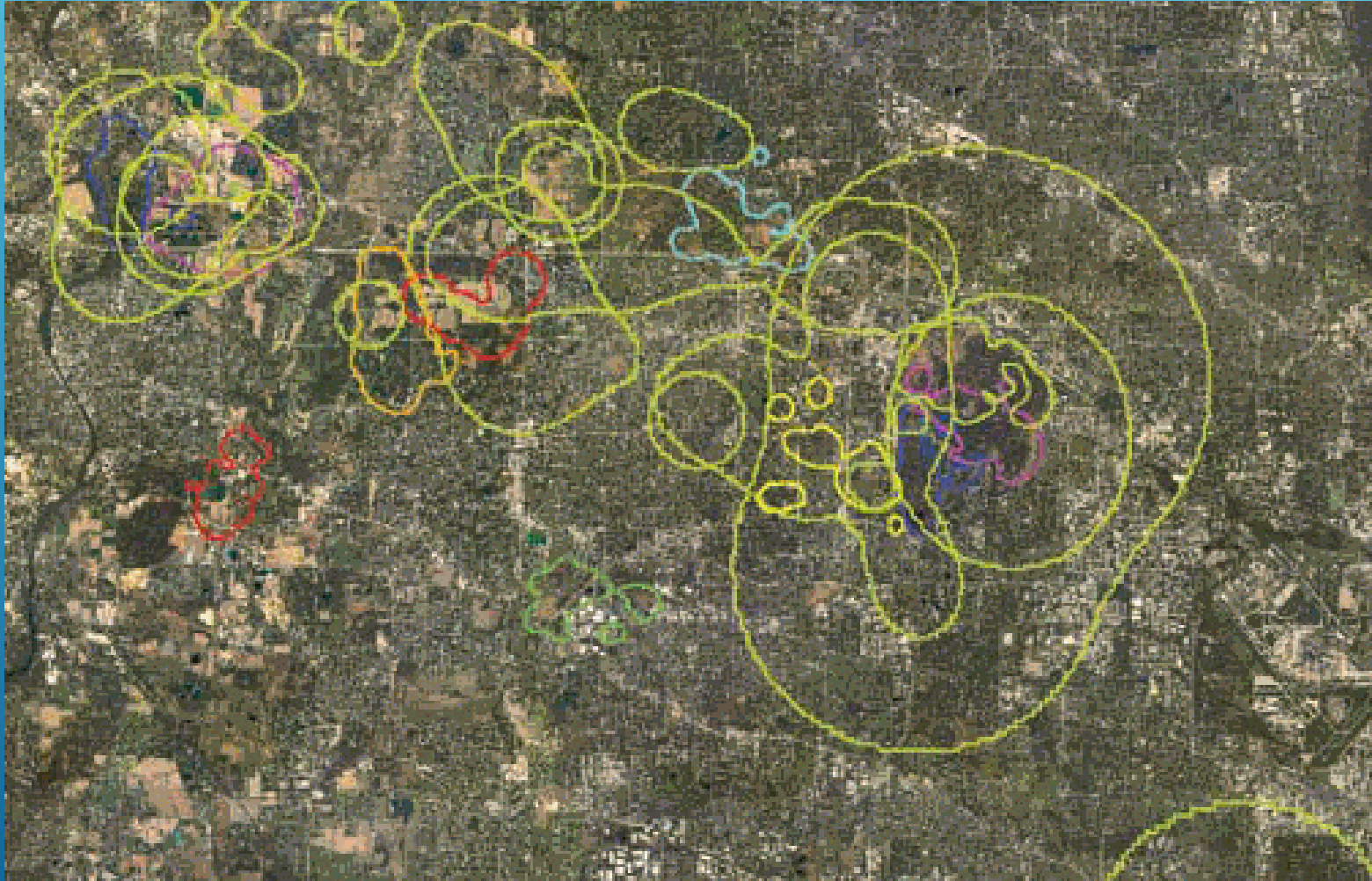


# COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) FACTS - CONTINUED

- ▶ **Pups** are born April and May, one litter per year
- ▶ Dens can be underground, in woodpiles, under sheds, in culverts, hollow logs or trees, etc.
- ▶ Both male and female coyotes care for **pups**
- ▶ Average litter size is 5-7 (range 2-19!)
- ▶ **Pups** weaned at 8 weeks
- ▶ Canines in general are very territorial
- ▶ IDNR did not reintroduce or translocate coyotes



# HOME RANGES FOR URBAN COYOTES



Graphic: Urban coyote research project

# When Should I Be Concerned?

- ▶ Every animal and situation is different
  - ▶ However, certain behaviors typically indicate whether the animal is a problem or just being a 'normal' coyote
  - ▶ Pay attention to coyote behavior and do not turn your back
- ▶ Coyotes can be more aggressive during **breeding season** and **when they have pups**
- ▶ Animals that are **sick or injured** can be more aggressive
- ▶ Urban Coyote Research Project: Threat Assessment



| Coyote behavior / activity  |                | Responses   |
|---|----------------|---|
| <p>Rarely or occasionally seen at night,<br/>more rarely during dusk and dawn</p>   | <p>LOW</p>     | <p>Limit food sources (garbage, pets feeding, wildlife feeding) Supervise pets and don't let them run free</p>                          |
| <p>Occasionally seen during the day<br/>Frequently seen at night<br/>Free-ranging pets occasionally disappear</p>                                     | <p>CONCERN</p> | <p>Use hazing, negative stimuli (shouting, chasing, throwing objects)</p>   |
| <p>Frequently seen during the day<br/>Stalking or attacking pets<br/>Fleeing from people</p>  | <p>CONCERN</p> | <p>Consider removal program in conjunction with education; prohibit/limit feeding of wildlife; supervise pets; use negative stimuli</p> |
| <p>Approaching people aggressively<br/>Growling, barking when hazed<br/>(rather than running)<br/>Following children<br/>Preying on pets in yards</p> | <p>HIGH</p>    | <p>Initiate removal program in conjunction with education; prohibit/limit feeding of wildlife; supervise pets; use negative stimuli</p> |

FIGURE 1. INDICATOR CHART OF VARIOUS COYOTE THREAT LEVELS ©URBAN COYOTE RESEARCH



# STEPS TO PREVENT HUMAN-COYOTE CONFLICTS

- ▶ Do not run if a coyote approaches you. Yell, stand up straight and wave your arms (the goal is to make yourself appear larger), or throw something at the coyote to make it move away (the goal is to scare it away, not to injure it).
- ▶ Teach your kids what to do if they see a coyote. Have them throw their arms up in the air and yell “like a monster” to scare the coyote away.
- ▶ Pay attention to your surroundings and be aware of the season and habitat (likely den sites, etc.)



# STEPS TO PREVENT HUMAN-COYOTE CONFLICTS, CONTINUED:

- ▶ **Do not feed coyotes.** Remove food sources such as bird food, pet food, ripe fruit or trash.
- ▶ Coyotes that are protecting their den or young will vigorously defend the area. Simply walking your dog in another area keeps everyone safe.
- ▶ Alert residents of the neighborhood and the local municipality (e.g., police, public safety officer) if, and as soon as, a problem develops with a coyote.
- ▶ Target the responsible coyote(s) when a pattern of “undesirable” behavior develops. Usually it will be easier to change human and domestic animal use of an area than to capture the coyote(s). Recognize that coyote population reduction (removing some or all of the coyotes in an area) is usually unrealistic and always temporary. Removal of coyotes also requires time, effort and funding.



© Urban Coyote Research

DON'T FEED  
WILDLIFE!



# JUST REMOVE ALL THE COYOTES IN MY AREA

- ▶ It would take the removal of ~70% of the population every year, to reduce the population
- ▶ Coyotes can have from 2 – 19 pups
- ▶ If resources are plentiful, females can have and raise more pups
- ▶ When an alpha pair are killed, a vacuum is created
- ▶ Young individuals move in and compete for territory
- ▶ People have tried for over a hundred years to kill ‘all’ the coyotes and failed ... It is not a viable option

# PROBLEM COYOTES

**Table 3.** Numbers of animals handled by individuals with Nuisance Wildlife Control Permits in Illinois, 2018.

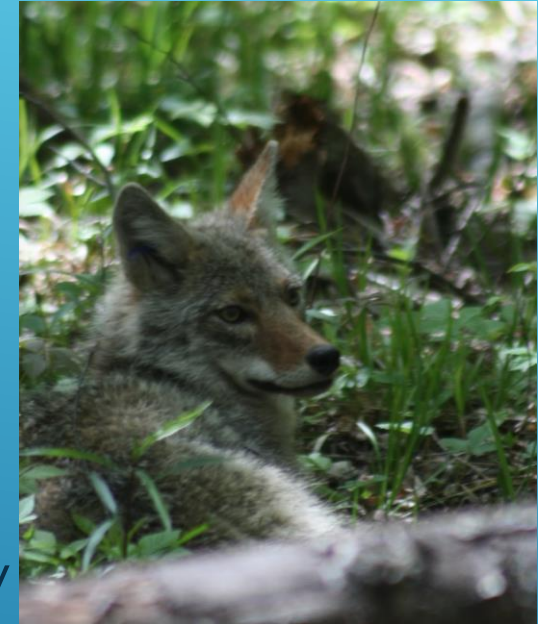
| Species           | Region      |              |             |             |             | Statewide     |
|-------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
|                   | I           | II           | III         | IV          | V           |               |
| Bats <sup>a</sup> | 308         | 816          | 94          | 28          | 5           | 1251          |
| Beaver            | 274         | 692          | 215         | 100         | 80          | 1361          |
| Birds             | 118         | 1969         | 193         | 461         | 39          | 2780          |
| Chipmunk          | 470         | 2565         | 61          | 188         | 127         | 3411          |
| Coyote            | 142         | 308          | 26          | 55          | 14          | 545           |
| Foxes             | 19          | 65           | 1           | 13          | 1           | 99            |
| Ground squirrels  | 278         | 635          | 41          | 36          | 0           | 990           |
| Muskrat           | 331         | 2111         | 391         | 194         | 36          | 3063          |
| Opossum           | 749         | 4822         | 467         | 548         | 162         | 6748          |
| Raccoon           | 3067        | 12,538       | 971         | 1866        | 601         | 19,043        |
| Squirrels         | 488         | 11,971       | 566         | 776         | 260         | 14,061        |
| Striped skunk     | 514         | 10,984       | 137         | 388         | 259         | 12,282        |
| Woodchuck         | 465         | 587          | 343         | 356         | 147         | 1898          |
| Other             | 889         | 198          | 403         | 1136        | 614         | 3240          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>8112</b> | <b>50261</b> | <b>3909</b> | <b>6145</b> | <b>2345</b> | <b>70,772</b> |

<sup>a</sup> Includes permittees' estimates of bats that were excluded.



# HOW DANGEROUS ARE COYOTES?

- ▶ Coyotes are wild animals and have individual personalities and behaviors
- ▶ Two people have been killed by coyotes in North America in the last century
- ▶ Several hundred people have been bitten or 'attacked'
- ▶ To put this in perspective, 20 – 40 people are killed in the US every year by domestic dogs
- ▶ 4 – 4.5 million dogs bite or 'attack' people in the US every year
- ▶ 7 people have been killed in the US in 2020 by dogs to date (one in Illinois, one in Indiana)





# PROBLEM COYOTES – WHAT NOW?

- ▶ Most coyotes do not cause problems. However, most problem coyotes are being fed.
  - ▶ Direct feeding
  - ▶ Indirect feeding
- ▶ Hunting season for coyotes is year round and no limit
- ▶ Trapping season lasts from November 10 – February 15
- ▶ Municipal ordinances prohibit discharging a firearm inside city limits and there are setbacks for hunting and trapping
- ▶ True problem coyotes should be removed by professionals

# REMOVAL

- ▶ Preventative measures do not always work. If a coyote is aggressive towards people or pets, it may need to be removed (**euthanized - Not Relocated**).
  - ▶ Option 1 – Licensed Hunters and Trappers
  - ▶ Option 2 – Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator
  - ▶ Option 3 - Nuisance Animal Removal Permit

# NUISANCE WILDLIFE CONTROL OPERATOR

- ▶ Pros (2 types of NWCO's – governmental and private)
  - ▶ Professional contractors (private) – licensed by the IDNR (not employees of DNR)
  - ▶ Some NWCO's are very skilled, professional and selective
  - ▶ NWCO's should be licensed/experienced for humane euthanasia
- ▶ Cons
  - ▶ Can be expensive
  - ▶ Varying skill levels, especially for challenging animals like coyotes
  - ▶ Difficult and time consuming to target a specific problem animal – how do you know you got 'the' problem animal?
  - ▶ Non-target animals are a concern
  - ▶ Animals not utilized

# NUISANCE ANIMAL REMOVAL PERMIT

## ▶ Pros

- ▶ Free – issued by IDNR Wildlife Biologists or Conservation Police

## ▶ Cons

- ▶ Very few people have the experience to deal with a problem coyote in an urban area
- ▶ Trapping skills are secondary to concerns about by-catch, safety, neighborhood perception, humane dispatch, etc.
- ▶ Humane euthanasia – Legal and humane euthanasia are difficult in an urban area (unless certified and trained to administer drugs)
- ▶ Animal is not utilized
- ▶ Public safety – You are liable once that trap is set. Can make the cost of a NWCO very affordable compared to legal issues if there are problems

# MORE ABOUT NUISANCE COYOTES

- ▶ Develop coyote response plan to deal with coyotes
  - ▶ Determine what a 'problem coyote' is in your area
  - ▶ Establish ordinances on feeding wildlife
  - ▶ Work within your community to document problems
- ▶ Information in this presentation came from several sources, including:
  - ▶ **Wildlife Illinois** – [wildlifeillinois.org](http://wildlifeillinois.org)
  - ▶ **Urban Coyote Research Project** – [urbancoyoteresearch.com](http://urbancoyoteresearch.com)

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