

Coyote Information Sheet

Provided by:

Santa Ana Parks, Recreation and Community Services Agency
Park Naturalist Office

Background

Common Name: Coyote
latrans

Scientific Name: *Canis*

Coyotes inhabit 90 percent of North America from Panama to Alaska. They are only absent from the harshest arctic region around the North Pole. Despite 200 years of efforts to control or eliminate coyotes, the species has managed to increase its range and population. Although usually seen alone, when found in large wilderness areas coyotes will also work in packs similar to their larger cousins the gray wolf. Coyotes are monogamous with pairs staying together for 3-4 years. Both males and females raise the pups that stay with the parents from April when they are born to the following autumn. Litters range from 5-10 pups.

Coyotes have been using Santiago Creek as a corridor for thousands of years. There is no way to stop them from doing this. However, there are several reasons why we are seeing more coyotes than we have in the recent past. Natural dispersal of the population occurs in autumn as young pups leave their parents to seek their own habitat and as mature animals, come out of the mountains following the availability of food. Heavy rains in 1997 led to an increase in food and shelter for coyotes in the hills and mountains of Orange County. This increase in food has led to an increase in the coyote population. Since 1997, the region has been experiencing a drought cycle that has reduced the food supply and forced many coyotes to travel farther to find food. In addition, new developments in East Orange, Tustin, Irvine, and Anaheim Hills have further reduced available habitat and forced coyotes to migrate out of the wilderness. Naturally, as they have for centuries, coyotes use safe corridors like Santiago, Aliso, San Diego, and San Juan Creeks. All cities along these corridors have reported more coyote sightings recently than in years past.

Trapping efforts have mostly failed in the past. Lethal traps often do more damage to domestic animals than to wild ones. Live trapping and relocation often only works for a short period of time as coyotes can travel 10-20 miles in a single night and quickly return to where they were captured. Coyotes are also aware of each other's territories and will quickly fill any available habitat. Coyotes can respond to openings in habitat areas by having larger litters when more habitat is available. In many cases, removal of one or two coyotes from an area will lead to as many as five moving in and competing for the space.

It is also important to remember that coyotes are incredibly smart animals that can and will eat almost anything. They are not strictly carnivores and often prefer seeds, berries, and nuts. As much as 80 percent of their diet is made up of vegetable matter. They can also be lazy and would much rather scavenge food from a garbage can, eat pet food left out at night, or forage on plant based foods found in their natural habitat. Hunting for small animals is usually a coyote's last choice. They also don't like humans and will usually avoid us whenever possible.

What Parks, Recreation and Community Services Agency is doing!

Planning is underway at Santiago Park to enhance and enlarge the wildlife habitat areas at the park and along Santiago Creek. This improved habitat should keep all but the most desperate coyotes in the park and out of our neighborhoods. A monitoring program is underway to help us determine how many coyotes are coming and going and where they enter and exit Santiago Creek. This information will help us plan future restoration projects and management practices aimed at keeping wildlife in appropriate areas. The public can help by calling the Park Naturalist Office (714) 571-4288 to tell us when and where they are seeing coyotes.

What You Can Do!

There are several steps you can take to minimize coyote impacts in your neighborhood:

- *Feed your pets indoors.*
- *If you can't feed pets indoors, then try to feed them during the day and in highly visible areas.*
- *Do not leave pet food outside, especially at night.*

- *Make sure all of your trash cans have snug fitting lids.*
- *Never feed coyotes or other wildlife.*
- *Do not approach wildlife; they can bite.*

By providing quality habitat in parks and open spaces, and eliminating easy access to food in neighborhoods, we can minimize the impacts from coyotes and other wildlife. For more information or to report sightings, call or write the Park Naturalist Office at:

Park Naturalist Office
Parks, Recreation and Community Services Agency M23
510 E. Memory Lane
P.O. Box 1988
Santa Ana, CA 92704
Ph. (714) 571-4288
Fax. (714) 543-8767

Or visit our office in the Lawn Bowling Center at Santiago Park, 2615 Valencia St., Santa Ana.