

COYOTE Sightings



There have been several sightings of a coyote in David Bartlett Park over the past few weeks. Our new neighbour - or neighbours - appears to have made him/herself at home in the area visiting the Park on several occasions.

The question is, with a coyote(s) in the Park area, should we be concerned?

A significant amount of research has been undertaken on the 'urban' coyote and the consensus appears to be that the coyote has little interest in humans or dogs. As omnivores, the coyote diet is rabbits, rodents (beaver, mice, moles, voles, gophers, etc.), birds as well as insects, berries and plants. They will also eat road kill (carrion). This year, the rabbits and geese are plentiful, so there is little to worry about in that regard.

The greater concern will be in the spring, if the coyote(s) are still around. At that point they will actively defend any threat to their pups, which includes protecting the pups, the den, or a food source; however, it is unlikely that the coyote will den in the Park simply because of the regular and frequent dog activity. It would be extremely dangerous for the coyote and its pups and they will not take that risk. Our dogs have left enough 'territorial messages' throughout the Park to clearly tell the coyote that this is a place to visit on occasion, but not to live.

Coyote Best Practices in the Park

- **Do not feed** the coyote. This includes 'unintentional feeding' by leaving a treat your dog has elected not to eat on the ground. Please pick it up and throw it away in the dog bin by the parking lot.
- **Do not run** from a coyote – stand your ground. Fleeing means you are prey. Stand tall, make noise, shout, throw a stick, be loud and aggressive. Slowly back away, always facing the animal until it loses interest in you or you have achieved a place of safety.
- **Report aggressive behaviour** to the National Capital Commission (613-239-5353).
- **Leash your dog** - for their protection and yours. Avoid the fight.

The Good News

Like all animals, coyotes serve a valuable purpose. They

- reduce pesky rodents
- help keep wildlife population under control (deer, geese, rabbits)
- take care of road kill

All of which saves taxpayer money as they do not have to be 'managed.'

An intro to the Coyote

At between 30 to 50 pounds, and 48 to 60 inches long (nose to tail), the coyote is a highly adaptable (smart) scavenger and hunter that can be found in urban and suburban areas, much like our wild rabbits and raccoons. In Ottawa, we play host to the Eastern coyote (*canus latrans thamnus*) found, naturally, in eastern Canada and the northern states.

Diet

Coyotes are omnivores (berries, plants, and animals such as mice, rabbits, birds), who will happily scavenge carrion (road kill) where available. They typically prefer early morning and late evening hunting. They are not nocturnal, unless their home is in a dense section of the city. That is not the case here, so it is likely the coyote will be seen during the day time hours. If there are pups to be fed, coyotes will hunt throughout the day.

Mating Season

The mating season runs from mid-December to the end of March, with 4 to 7 pups born in early Spring to a mated pair. Pups are kept in a den, which could be a rocky crevice or dense thicket of brush, with a protective parent nearby while the other hunts. Coyotes can live in packs with multiple generations, as a family or can be solitary as they transition from juvenile to adulthood.

Territory

Coyotes have both a range – a wide area over which they roam and hunt - and a territory – which they will defend against other coyotes and predators. They mark this territory with urine, much like our dogs. The range can vary dramatically. A sole coyote likely does not have a territory to defend and will travel farther afield in search of a mate and food. In urban areas, the range is typically a collection of parks or green space.



Additional Information:

[Coyote Awareness Information](#)
[Urban Coyote Research Program](#)