



North America's Native Song-dog, the

Coyote. *“The coyote (Canis latrans), also known as the American jackal, brush wolf, or the prairie wolf, is a species of canine found throughout North and Central America, ranging from Panama in the south, north through Mexico, the United States, and Canada. It occurs as far north as*

Alaska and all but the northernmost portions of Canada. Currently, 19 subspecies are recognized, with 16 in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, and three in Central America. Unlike the related gray wolf, which is Eurasian in origin, evolutionary theory suggests the coyote evolved in North America during the Pleistocene epoch 1.81 million years ago alongside the dire wolf. Although not closely related, the coyote evolved separately to fill roughly the same ecological niche in the Americas that is filled in Eurasia and Africa by the similarly sized jackals. Unlike the wolf, the coyote's range has expanded in the wake of human civilization, and coyotes readily reproduce in metropolitan areas,” according to Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coyote>

OK, having said all that, I know, they are mostly hated by ranchers and some pet owners--even my cowboy dad, quite the naturalist, had a hard time finding one positive thing to say about them. He didn't even kill most rattlesnakes he encountered in our ranch hills, but he would shoot a coyote and hang its carcass on a barbed wire fence every chance he got. “I wouldn't mind as much if they actually hunted the ewes and lambs to eat for survival, but they rip their throats out for the blood and then leave them to suffer to death--I have no love for them.” But I



like to think that he would be interested in and even embrace another way to keep the livestock safe and let the native coyote live off the rodents it also eats. During lambing season, Dad left his herd dogs up in the hills with the sheep, so today he might consider a dog designed for this service--maybe even a llama. In any case, I was curious about our native song-dog and what could be done to learn to co-exist with them--and apparently I was not alone!

Back in his days as the local State Trapper, Shorty Clark, seen at left, used to hang the coyotes on barbed wire fences to let the livestockmen know he was doing his job. He then sent their ears to the state to be counted. Photo and information courtesy of his daughter Gilda.

“The calls a coyote makes are high-pitched and variously described as howls, yips, yelps, and barks. These calls may be a long rising and falling note (a howl) or a series of short notes (yips). These calls are most often heard at dusk or night...Although these calls are made throughout the year, they are most common during the spring mating season and in the fall when the pups leave their families to establish new territories. When a coyote calls its pack together, it howls at one high note. When the pack is together, it howls higher and higher, and then it will yip and yelp and also do a yi-yi sound, very shrill, with the howl...

Sometimes labelled as carnivores but more often as omnivores, coyotes are opportunistic, versatile feeders. They eat small mammals such as...voles, prairie dogs, eastern cottontails,

ground squirrels, mice, birds, snakes, lizards, deer, javelina, and livestock, as well as insects and other invertebrates.” from Wikipedia.org



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0NqJjQJI0g> for a 2010 NBC video on *Project Coyote* and www.projectcoyote.org for information on methods for co-existence, rather than shooting or trapping, now being used by many ranchers. Livestock guard dogs or llamas, anyone? They will help you pay for and train them! Many ranchers are having success with this.

