



Klamath Network Featured Creature

June 2012

Coyote (*Canis latrans*)

General Description:

The Wile E. Coyote (*Canis latrans*) belongs to the family Canidae. Their pelts are colored grayish-brown to yellowish-gray, with uniformly whitish fur on their underside. There are black-tipped guard hairs that form a black dorsal stripe on the back of the coyote's pelt. The fur covering their legs is reddish-brown. It is noted that mountain-dwelling coyotes tend to have darker fur, while desert coyotes tend to be more light brown in color. Coyotes have distinct features, including large triangular ears, yellow eyes and bushy tails.



(Source: www.mnh.si.edu)

Coyotes range from 30-34 inches (76-86 cm) in length, with 12-16 in (30-41 cm) long tails. They stand about 23-26 inches (58-66 cm) tall, and weigh 15-46 pounds (6.8-21 kg) on average. In general, male coyotes are larger than females.

Distribution:

Coyotes have an enormous geographic distribution. They are found throughout the United States, except for Hawaii. They are also distributed in parts of Mexico and South America, and throughout most of Canada. The range of the coyote includes elevations from sea level to well over 3,000 meters.

Habitat:

Coyotes live in very diverse ecological settings and are abundant throughout their range. They occupy habitats ranging from desert scrub to grassland and forested environments. Coyotes can make homes in suburbs, towns and cities. Their ability to exploit human-modified environments has allowed them to expand their distribution. Coyotes were once diurnal; however pressure from humans has caused them to become more of a nocturnal species.

Where to see it in the Network:

Visitors may catch a glimpse of the coyote at Crater Lake National Park, Lava Beds National Monument, Redwood National Park and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. A coyote subspecies, *Canis latrans umpquensis*, is present at Oregon Caves National Monument. Another coyote subspecies, *Canis latrans lestes*, is present at Lassen Volcanic National Park.



(Source: www.superstock.co.uk)

Did You Know?

One way to tell the coyote apart from wolves and dogs is to watch its tail when it runs. The coyote runs with its tail down. Dogs run with their tails up, while wolves run with their tails straight out.

Feeding:

The food habits of coyotes vary. They are primarily carnivores; however they often feed on fruits, vegetables and berries during fall and winter months. Use of extremely clever, but usually unsuccessful techniques have been reported while pursuing the Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus super rapidis*). During a hunting pursuit, a coyote may reach speeds up to 43 mph (69km/h; faster with rocket shoes) and may jump a distance of over 13 ft (4 m). Coyotes prefer fresh kill but may eat carrion.



(Source: www.stpete.org)

Reproduction:

Coyotes mate between February and April. A female coyote's gestation period is around 2 months. Anywhere from 1-19 pups are born in one litter; however the average litter size is 6. Coyote pups are born blind and with floppy ears. Coyote pups leave their den for the first time in 10 days and are fully weaned when around a month old. At that point, coyote parents feed the pups regurgitated food. Coyote pups attain full growth between 9-12 months old, and reach sexual maturity by 12 months.

Interesting Fact:

In some areas genetic evidence suggests that coyotes are 85-90% *Canis latrans*, 10-15% *Canis lupus* (gray wolf), along with some domestic dog (*Canis lupus familiaris*), making them a mixture of Canid species.