



**Pointed Ears**

**Slender  
Muzzle**

**Bushy Tail**





























## Feeding frenzy at Joshua Tree



Staff photo by DAVID CREAMES

A coyote approaches a car that pulled off a road inside Joshua Tree National Park.

## Not-so-wild coyotes raise concerns

By ANDREW SILVA  
Staff Writer

**T**hey stand casually, smack in the middle of the road, hoping for handouts.

Stop or slow down and they'll saunter right up to your car. It's not Los Angeles or New York or an off-ramp on a local freeway. It's Joshua Tree National Park and the moochers have four legs.

The wild coyotes of Joshua Tree have lost some of their wildness in recent years as the wily canines have learned that humans are pushovers for a fluffy face.

"The recent (coyote) behavior is of concern," Joshua Tree Superintendent Ernest Quintana said. "And people don't help by feeding them."

National parks are supposed to be oases of nature at its most natural, the "Crown Jewels" of the United States.

But national parks also attract millions of people a year to those



File photo by RODRIGO PEN

Close proximity to humans and their food has made coyotes less afraid.

and Yosemite National Park brings in about 4 million people a year.

"You've got human beings with a road smack in the middle of coyote habitat," said Hank McCutchen, Joshua Tree resource manager.

From the car-shredding black bears in Yosemite to the ubiquitous begging squirrels in many parks and forests, close proximity to lots of

national parks," McCutchen said. "Begging chipmunks, begging bears, begging deer."

In previous decades, National Park Service officials considered such conflicts, including the larcenous Yosemite bears, as a "bear problem or deer problem," he said. Parahandling deer were even shot long ago at Grand Canyon National Park, he said.

























# Living with Carnivores

## Oregon Workshop Presentation 2001, Coyote

	<u>Narrative</u>
Slide 1 Coyote face	The coyote (scientific name: <i>Canis latrans</i> ) is one of the most common carnivores in Oregon, and its populations are thriving. Historically, coyotes were most commonly found on the Great Plains. Their current range extends from Central America to the Arctic. Except for Hawaii, coyotes live in all of the United States, plus Canada and Mexico.
Slide 2 Coyote with characteristics	The coyote is a member of the dog family, and is native to Oregon. Coyotes have erect pointed ears, a slender muzzle and a bushy tail. Most coyotes are brownish gray in color with a light gray to cream colored belly. However, their color may range from very dark to very light. Most coyotes have dark or black hairs over their back and tail.
Slide 3 Coyote / sunset	Coyotes are most active around dawn and dusk, but they can be moving anytime during the day or night. Most sightings of coyotes by people occur during the hours close to sunrise and sunset.
Slide 4 Coyote in field	Oregon's adult coyotes generally weigh between 20 and 30 pounds, measure about 2 feet tall and 4 feet in length. They are smaller than most people think, and on average female coyotes are slightly smaller than males.
Slide 5 Coyote eating rodent	One of the keys to the coyote's success is its adaptability, particularly when it comes to food. Typically, rodents and rabbits are the mainstay of the coyote's diet. However, coyotes are highly opportunistic in their feeding habits. They will take advantage of just about any source of food. Sometimes humans view this positively, such as in the important ecological role that the coyote plays in helping control rodent populations. Sometimes people view this negatively, such as when coyotes cause damage to human interests.
Slide 6 Coyote killing sheep	Ranchers know the coyote as the number one predator of livestock in the country, causing millions of dollars in losses annually. Sheep, cattle, and goats incur most of this loss, but coyotes are opportunistic and may attempt to take almost any vulnerable animal. Suburbanites, and some

	city dwellers have learned that coyotes will also eat cats and small dogs if given the opportunity.
Slide 7 Deer carcass	Coyotes also feed on wild ungulates, such as deer, elk and pronghorn, filling an ecological role by removing weak and vulnerable animals from the population. During fawning and calving seasons, coyotes prey upon the young of these animals. In winter, they prey on adults when conditions give them an advantage, such as when a crust forms on deep snow or when animals are weakened by disease or starvation. Coyotes also take strong, healthy individuals, but to a lesser extent. Coyotes are efficient scavengers, and feed on carrion such as deer and elk carcasses – especially during the winter and spring months.
Slide 8 watermellon	The coyote is a true survivor and will eat just about anything, given the opportunity. Other foods include: lizards and snakes, frogs and foxes, doughnuts and sandwiches, fruits and vegetables, birds and bird seed, grass and grasshoppers, pet food and pets, carrion, and garbage.
Slide 9 Coyote pups	A high reproductive rate and rapid growth of offspring aid in the coyote's success. Coyotes breed once a year, usually around February, and pups are born about 60 days later. An average coyote litter contains four or five pups. However, litters up to eight are common and as many as 13 pups have been reported in a single litter. Pups are born in dens. In urban or suburban environments, dens can be in storm drains, under storage sheds, in holes dug in vacant lots, parks or golf courses, or in any other dark, dry place.
Slide 10 Coyote with pup	Pups are cared for by both parents and can eat meat and run well by the time they are a month old. Because food requirements increase dramatically during pup rearing, this is a period when conflicts between coyotes and humans are most likely to increase. Adult coyotes aggressively defend their territory during this time, and are more likely to attack any domestic dog they encounter.
Slide 11 Coyotes in field	By six months of age, pups have permanent teeth and are nearly full grown. About this time, female coyotes train their offspring to search for food, so it is not unusual to observe a family group traveling together. If people provide them food (either deliberately or inadvertently) the youngsters can quickly learn not to fear humans and may develop a dependency on easy food sources rather than their natural prey.
Slide 12	After this training period, usually in October and November, most young disperse and find their own breeding territory. However, one or two pups

coyote	may stay with the parents and become part of the family group. Although coyotes tend to travel and hunt singly or in pairs, they may form groups as population densities increase or where food is abundant.
Slide 13 Dead pup on road	Coyote mortality can be caused by humans; a wide variety of diseases and parasites; starvation; other carnivores, such as bears and cougars; and other environmental factors.
Slide 14 Shot coyote	Coyotes are an unprotected mammal in Oregon, and may be hunted year-round. There is no closed season and no bag limit. A hunting license from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is required, except for landowners hunting on their own land. Coyotes may NOT be hunted or harassed from snowmobiles, ATVs or passenger vehicles. Coyotes also may be trapped, with a license from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.
Slide 15 Newspaper page	In areas where they are hunted or trapped, coyotes are extremely wary of humans. However, they can become very bold in urban areas, where they are less likely to be harassed and more likely to associate people with food. Because of the growing urban interface, coyote/human encounters have become more common during the last ten years. For example, in southern California between 1988 and 1997 there were 53 documented coyote attacks on humans, and 21 people were bitten. Most of these incidents resulted in only minor physical injuries. However, several children have been more seriously bitten, and in 1981, coyotes killed a three-year-old girl in Glendale, California. The risk of a coyote attack is extremely low, but increasing, and almost always associated with coyotes that have lost their fear of humans.
Slide 16 Coyote in field	Just because you see a coyote doesn't mean you have a problem, and you can help keep coyotes from becoming a problem by:
Slide 17 Child and pet food	<p><b>1) Eliminating sources of food and water around your home:</b></p> <p>§ Don't ever put food out to lure coyotes closer. Many wild animal bites occur when people attempt to feed them or forget to treat them as <u>wild</u> animals. Animals that lose their natural fear of humans are more likely to pose a danger to humans, and the life span of such an animal is shortened.</p> <p>§ Dispose of garbage where coyotes can't get to it. Secure garbage containers and eliminate garbage odors.</p> <p>§ Store pet and livestock feed where it is inaccessible to wildlife.</p>
Slide 18	§ Remove sources of water, if possible. Water is a major source of

Bird bath	attraction for many wildlife species, particularly in dry climates.
Slide 19 Bird feeder	§ Remove bird feeders. Coyotes are attracted to bird feeders by the seed and the concentration of birds and rodents that come to the feeder, as well as the domestic house cats that stalk the birds and rodents.
Slide 20 Split slide, house w/ fence, house w/ shrubs	<p><b>2) Making the area less attractive and less accessible to coyotes:</b></p> <p>§ Remove or trim near ground level shrubbery that provides hiding cover for coyotes or prey.</p> <p>§ Fence your yard. For best results, the fence should be at least six feet high, have no openings greater than four inches, with the bottom <u>at least</u> touching the ground. The best coyote fences also have a two-foot extension buried at a sloping angle toward the outside of the fence.</p>
Slide 21 Split slide, coyote on street, house cat	<p><b>3) Avoiding confrontations:</b></p> <p>§ Don't leave small children outside unattended.</p> <p>§ Don't allow pets to run free. Always walk your dog on a leash. Accompany your pet outside, especially at night.</p> <p>§ Provide secure shelters for poultry, rabbits, and other vulnerable animals.</p> <p>§ Actively discourage coyotes from visiting your area. Be assertive in your behavior. When you see coyotes, make loud noises and throw rocks or other objects to make them leave.</p> <p>§ Ask your neighbors to follow all of these same steps.</p>
Slide 22 Composit slide, lamb, fence	<p>There are some steps to reduce coyote/livestock conflicts. Where possible:</p> <p>§ Use net-wire or electric fencing to keep coyotes away from livestock.</p> <p>§ Shorten the length of calving or lambing seasons.</p> <p>§ Confine livestock in a coyote-proof corral at night when coyotes are most likely to attack livestock.</p> <p>§ Use motion-sensing lights above corrals.</p> <p>§ Burn, bury, or render dead livestock so coyotes won't be attracted to scavenge.</p> <p>§ Remove habitat that provides homes to natural prey of coyotes, like rabbits, from lambing and calving area.</p> <p>§ Use strobe lights and sirens to scare coyotes away (these should be moved daily to new locations).</p>
Slide 23 Guard animals	It is also helpful to use guard animals, like dogs, donkeys and llamas, to protect livestock.
Slide 24	The Oregon Department of Agriculture has jurisdiction over economic

Wildlife Services agent	and damage issues, such as livestock losses, and response to complaints is usually handled by Wildlife Services (a federal agency). Landowners may control damage-causing coyotes by shooting, trapping, or other means.
Slide 25 Coyote portrait	It has long been recognized that the coyote is an important part of the natural world we live in, and the human/coyote relationship will always be a controversial one. We hope that some of these commonsense precautions will be helpful in minimizing your potential conflicts with coyotes, and enhancing your understanding of this fascinating and adaptable creature.

**END**