

# COYOTE

*(Canis latrans)*



## **DID YOU KNOW:**

Three wild members of the dog family live in our area: the red fox, the secretive forest-dwelling gray fox and the adaptable coyote. The scientific name for coyote means dog-barker, referring to its wide range of yips, howls and barks.

## **EATING HABITS:**

Coyotes are not picky eaters, but they prefer meat. They play an important role in controlling wild populations of mice and rabbits (their primary diet). Wild fruits are a favorite treat. They also consume birds, plants and insects.

## THE YOUNG:

Usually five to seven babies (pups) are born in April or May. Both Mom and Dad raise, protect and teach the pups. While Dad brings Mom food, she



nurses the tiny helpless pups. When the pups are about 8 weeks old, Mom and Dad regurgitate partly digested food for the pups to eat. Mom may also tear small bits of fresh meat to feed the pups. Eventually, the pups accompany their parents on hunting trips. The family is affectionate, with lots of grooming and

licking and play. In the fall, the young are skilled hunters and head out on their own.

## HABITAT (HOME):

These intelligent creatures prefer open brushy areas bordered by a forest. Coyotes can be found in wilderness areas through North America. The family lives in underground burrows, either dug by themselves or previously dug by woodchucks, foxes or other animals. It is a safe place to rest and raise young.

## DEFENSIVE HABITS:

These shy, speedy canines avoid contact with people and large dogs. They can sprint short distances at speeds up to 45 miles an hour. Though their first defense is to stay hidden or run, they can be fierce fighters. Sharp teeth, strong jaws for biting and strong legs and claws for kicking all can be used for a successful defense against an enemy.

## UNUSUAL FACTS:

- Coyotes that live where domestic dogs may be nearby have learned to be quiet near their dens, thus protecting themselves and their young from being discovered.