



COYOTE

April 20, 2023

Diet

Although coyotes live in family groups, they usually do most of their hunting alone and at night. Coyotes are opportunists, feeding mainly on small mammals but also on carrion, bird eggs, and vegetable matter such as acorns, mesquite and palo verde beans, and juniper and manzanita berries. They also prey on pronghorn and deer fawns and insects when such items are available. In urban areas, garbage, domestic cats, and small dogs can often be a food source. When hunting small prey like mice, the coyote stands still with its legs stiff and then pounces on its prey. When hunting larger prey like deer, coyotes may hunt in packs. Coyotes also often follow badgers and catch animals that pop out of the burrow the badger is digging.

Distribution, Abundance and Population Monitoring

The geographic distribution of coyotes has dramatically expanded since 1900. Previously restricted to the western two-thirds of North America, coyotes now occur across most of North America, from the Atlantic to the Pacific seaboard and from Alaska to Panama. Coyotes have expanded their range into the eastern United States over the last 100 years. They are now found in all parts of the United States, except for Hawaii. The coyote is found in a variety of habitats including fields, plains, forests, and brushy areas. Although coyotes can use any habitat, they typically prefer open areas, such as the prairie and desert. In urban areas, coyotes prefer wooded patches and shrubbery, which provides shelter to hide from people.

Coyotes are abundant in the western U.S. and are becoming more common in the eastern U.S. Scent stations, trail cameras, vocalization responses, mark-recapture, scat counts, and track counts are techniques that have been used to assess relative or absolute abundance for small geographic areas but are difficult to implement statewide. Therefore,



managers must often rely on population indices because of the difficulty in obtaining adequate data to estimate coyote population size over a large landscape such as an entire state.

Data on harvest levels can help inform managers about population trends. The Arizona Game and Fish Department uses data derived from annual harvest and observation questionnaires to evaluate long-term trends in harvest and observation rates which can serve as indicators of population change. Collecting data on the method of harvest and game management unit where harvested also allows wildlife managers to evaluate harvest distribution and density across the state.

Management History

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's coyote management goals are to maintain present range, distribution, and population levels in Arizona; and to allow for maximum recreational, economic, and aesthetic uses commensurate with existing populations statewide. Classified as a predator, coyotes are hunted, trapped for their fur, and taken to reduce predation on livestock and wildlife such as pronghorn fawns, and sometimes for public safety. However, harvest management and monitoring has been established to maintain long-term viable populations. In Arizona, coyotes can be hunted year round with a valid hunting license and may be trapped from November 1 through the end of February with a valid trapping license. Trappers are required to submit an annual report.

The coyote harvest by hunters has been relatively stable during the past 10 years. Coyotes are commonly taken while "predator calling," hunting other game, or simply as opportunities arise. Formerly, trappers rivaled hunters in the number of coyotes taken, but the reported take of trapped coyotes during the past 10 years has averaged about 700 a year. The principal reason for this reduced take is undoubtedly the decline in market value of a coyote pelt on the international fur market as well as the prohibition of the use of foothold traps on public land.