

# *Nature Tidbits*



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# The American Coyote

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# History of the Coyote



- Originally native to the American West, now has migrated to the East Coast.
- Canine family (along with fox, wolf, and domestic pet dogs).
- Considered to be a nuisance animal / pest. Or worse.

# Lore



- The coyote appears often in the tales and traditions of Native Americans—usually as a very savvy and clever beast.
  - Wylie Coyote cartoon
- Often included in the settings for old cowboy and western movies.
- Howling at the moon (canine chorus).





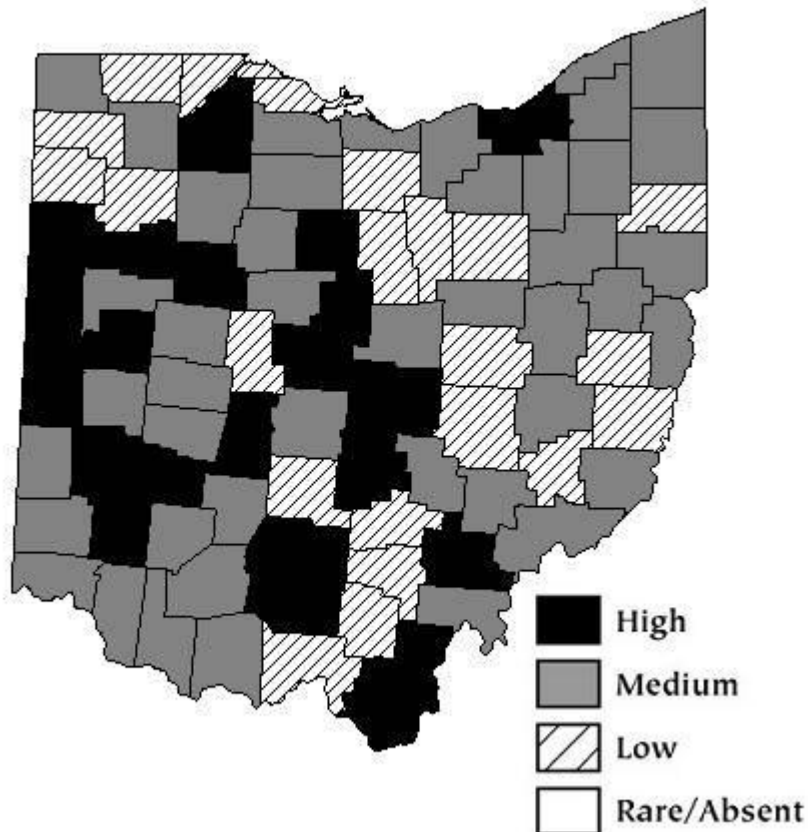
# Eastward Migration



- Very adaptable to urban sprawl and interaction with human lifestyle.
- Became widely noticed in Ohio in the 1970's.
- Colonizes in large cities like Chicago.
- Lives in Warren County. Has been seen in the city of Lebanon.
- Mason, Lebanon, and West Chester are currently experiencing increased coyote activity.

# Ohio Coyote Population

## COYOTE RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION



## Coyote Relative Abundance, 1990-2015

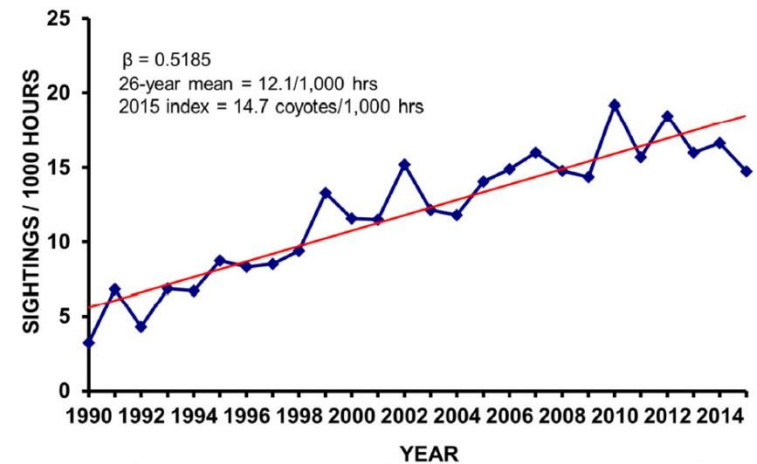


Figure 2. Coyote relative abundance based on bowhunter survey indices, 1990-2015.

# Species Interaction

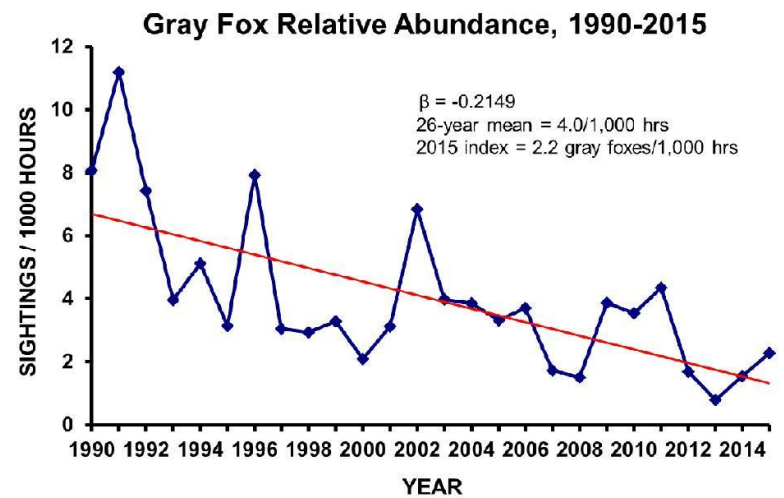
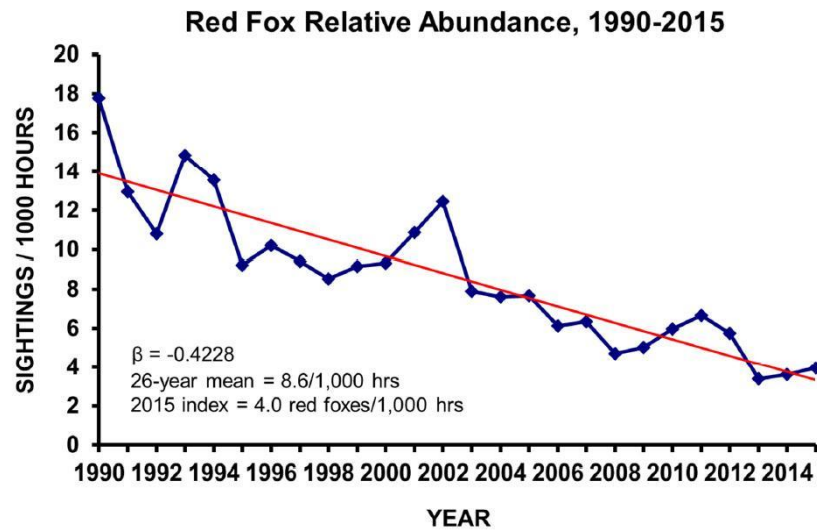


Figure 6. Gray fox relative abundance based on bowhunter survey indices, 1990-2015.

Figure 5. Red fox relative abundance based on bowhunter survey indices, 1990-2015.

# Coyote Characteristics

- Mammal
- Size: 3-foot body plus 16-inch tail; Thigh high on an adult human being
- Weight: 20 – 50 pounds
- Long-legged
- Long-eared
- Yellow eyes
- Teeth!
- Acute senses of sight, hearing, and smell
- Longevity – up to 14 years
- Can run as fast as 40 mph
- Lope – creepy, spooky
- Hunt both as loners and in packs
- Pairs mate for life
- Annual litter usually 3 – 12 pups
- Tail down – no wagging





# Color Variations

- Gray
- Silver
- Brown
- Black(ish)
- Rusty Red
- Off-white / Dirty white
- Mottled



# Habitat

- Brush land
- Wood lots
- Creek banks
- Wood piles
- Old buildings



# Diet



- Omnivore. Eats almost anything. An opportunist.
- Meat / carrion
- Fruit
- Cat food, dog food
- Garbage
- French fries
- Rodents
- Small game
- Song birds





# Vocalization

- Yips and yaps
- Siren “sing-alongs”
- Squeals
- Howls
- Wails
- Growls





# Breeding

- Mate for Life
- Breeding around Valentine's Day in Ohio
- Pups are kept secure in a nest, den, burrow, abandoned building, etc.
- Both parents feed and protect their young
- The pups are able to hunt on their own by the following fall.



# Studies and Research



Dr. Stan Gehrt is the Principal Investigator of the Cook County Coyote Project, having initiated the study in 2000. As Chair of the Center for Wildlife Research at the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation, he directs a variety of research projects both at the Foundation and around the country. Dr. Gehrt continues to supervise many daily aspects of the project while working full-time as an Associate Professor and Extension specialist at The Ohio State University. He is regarded as an international expert of urban wildlife and his research has been featured in numerous print, radio, and television outlets. Dr. Gehrt is the senior editor of the volume 'Urban Carnivores' published by Johns Hopkins University Press. Research interests focus on various aspects of mammalian ecology, especially in urban systems, and dynamics of wildlife disease.

# Interactions with Human Beings and Pets

- Coyotes are normally shy and reclusive, avoiding human contact
- However, there have been coyote attacks on humans & domestic animals
  - Most attacks on human beings have been in California (hundreds)
  - Less than a handful of known attacks on humans in Ohio
- Coyotes hate cats and small dogs. Will attack if given the opportunity.
  - Pets should be kept inside or on a leash when out for a walk
  - Keep pet food off the porch and inside the house.
- Coyotes have decimated sheep herds in Warren Co. without eating the meat!
- If face-to-face with a coyote:
  - Don't turn your back
  - Stare it down
  - Jump, scream, yell, wave arms, be a bully!
  - Throw rocks and sticks
- Don't leave small children unattended in coyote country



# Coyote Attacks on People

- Coyote attacks on people are very rare. More people are killed by errant golf balls and flying champagne corks each year than are bitten by coyotes.
- Often, coyote attacks are preventable by modifying human behavior and educating people about ways to prevent habituation. In many human attack incidents, it turns out that the offending coyote was being fed by people. In many other instances, people were bitten while trying to rescue their free-roaming pet from a coyote attack. Less often, people are bitten by cornered coyotes, or even more rarely, rabid coyotes.



# Coyote Hunting and Trapping In Ohio

- The coyote is an unprotected species
- No closed season – no limit
- License required
- Daylight hunting only
- Fur value up to \$30 per pelt



## Miscellaneous Facts – Odds and Ends

- Coyotes are monogamous breeders and breeding occurs January through March.
- Gestation lasts approximately 63 days. Litters are born in April and May and can contain 1-12 pups.
- The female selects, prepares, and maintains the den.
- Occasionally, two or three females will share a large den area.
- Related females will sometimes act as helpers in the care of offspring of other coyotes in the den.
- Both parents hunt for food and feed the young. However, the male takes the lead role when the pups are newborns, obtaining enough food for both his mate and offspring.
- The parents will regurgitate their stomach contents for their offspring's meals.
- At about three weeks of age, the young leave the den under the watch of their parents.
- At 8 to 12 weeks of age, the pups are taught hunting skills.
- The coyotes stay together in a family unit throughout the summer into mid-fall when the young will break from the family unit and develop territories of their own anywhere from 10 to 100 miles away.

## Miscellaneous Facts – Odds and Ends (continued)

- It is not unusual for young female coyotes to remain in the family unit into the following year; young males that have either never left the unit or that attempt to rejoin it the following year are run off by the male.
- The coyote is a nocturnal animal, active during the nighttime hours. However, when it is less threatened by man, it will hunt and move from place to place during the day.
- The coyote will hunt in unrelated (non-family) pairs or large groups. Coyotes are omnivorous and typical foods include small mammals (voles, shrews, rabbits, mice), vegetables, nuts, and carrion. Unchecked, they will eat livestock, particularly sheep and chickens.
- The coyote's strength is that it can adapt and exploit most any habitat to its advantage. While most wildlife species have avoided developed areas and often declined as a result of man's expansion, the coyote seems to have thrived.

# **Coyotes & Rabies**

Coyotes are known carriers of rabies, which is spread through bites and scratches. The illness progresses quickly and early symptoms are similar to those of the flu. Infected individuals may also experience hallucinations, anxiety, tremors, uncontrollable salivation, and even paralysis as the virus attacks the central nervous system. People bitten by a potentially rabid coyote should seek medical attention immediately.

## **Other Coyote Diseases**

Other illnesses transmitted by coyotes include tularemia, canine distemper, canine hepatitis, and mange. Coyotes also host ticks, fleas, and other parasites, which can spread a handful of diseases on their own. Due to the risk of infection, individuals should never approach coyotes. Instead, contact professional wildlife control experts to remove the animals safely and humanely.



## **Best Viewing & Hunting Opportunities**

- Delaware Wildlife Area, Delaware County
- Deer Creek Wildlife Area, Fayette, Madison & Pickaway counties
- Fallsville Wildlife Area, Highland County
- Caesar Creek Lake Wildlife Area, Greene, Warren & Clinton counties
- Spring Valley Wildlife Area, Greene & Warren counties
- Warren County Hisey Park

## **Coyote News (not “fake news”)**

- Coyote attack in Warren leaves 13-year-old family dog 'Bella' clinging to life
- Keep pets safe as more coyote sightings are reported in area (ODNR –Jan. 2018)
- Candid experts recommend coexistence as best strategy
- Top Scientists: “Culling, Bounties Don’t Work”
- Coyotes Are Colonizing Cities.
- Eastern coyotes showing more wolf-like trait
- Coyote aggression increasing in area.
- Coyote concerns voiced by locals to town council.
- Feds capture and euthanize coyote family of five living near LaGuardia airport.
- Program working to re-establish natural fear of humans in coyotes.



## **Coyote News (continued)**

- **Where are all these coyotes coming from?**
- **Coyotes go “bridge and tunnel”.**
- **Are urban coyotes more aggressive now?**
- **Living responsibly with coyotes**
- **CoyoteSmarts campaign aims to inform on how to best “coexist” with coyotes**
- **Rise of the coyote: the new top dog**
- **Killing individual coyotes doesn’t effectively curb their population growth.**
- **Rhode Island woman found guilty of feeding coyotes**

# Other Animals Expanding Their Range

- Beaver – Armco Park
- Bobcat – Germantown Park, Fernald Preserve
- Bear – Eastern Ohio
- Armadillo?
- Fisher
- Possum – northward into Canada
- Wild Turkey



The End





- Nature Tidbits #1 Was given at **Ft. Ancient on 2/25/17** with a photo of the Rte. 350 Ft. Ancient entry sign on Pg. 1.
- Nature Tidbits 1A was given at the **741 Senior Center on 5/4/17** with a photo of Marble Hall on Pg. 1.
- Nature Tidbits 1B was given to **Maryhaven boys on 5/5/17** with a picture of Kings Island Tower on the front page.
- Nature Tidbits #1C was given at **Otterbein Retirement Community on 2/26/18** with a picture of Marble Hall on the front page.