

## Coexisting With Coyotes

The Eastern Coyote is a species considered to be native to southeastern Massachusetts. While they can interrupt our way of life, they still have a right to be here, and management efforts show that they are not going anywhere. Efforts to rid areas of the animals have proven ineffective and detrimental to the ecosystems they live in. Several steps can be taken to ensure the safety of pets and children in the community.

1. Do not feed pets outside. Coyotes are not only attracted to the smell of pet food, but will take risks by attacking a pet if their food source has run low. Feeding your pets inside helps to keep the smell away from coyotes, and pets safe.
2. Do not corner or provoke a coyote. Typically, coyotes are shy and pose no threat to humans, however they can attack if they feel threatened.
3. Keep trash cans covered and preferably indoors. Coyotes will travel a great distance to feed at garbage containers once they have picked up the scent.
4. Do not feed coyotes or any other wildlife that will attract coyotes.
5. Supervise pets when they are outside, and they should be leashed or in a fenced in yard. Do not leave leashed pets unsupervised.
6. Keep havens for small mammals such as wood piles and brush piles away from living spaces.
7. If concerned about coyotes and are outside in an active coyote area, make noise to alert the coyote of your presence. This will help to scare the animals away.
8. If you encounter an injured coyote, call Animal Control or a wildlife care center. DO NOT approach it.

## Town of Plymouth



Department of  
Marine and Environmental Affairs  
11 Lincoln Street, Plymouth, MA 02630  
508-747-1620 x134  
[www.plymouth-ma.gov](http://www.plymouth-ma.gov)

### Emergency Contacts

In the event of an animal emergency, please contact the appropriate office:

Police Department 911  
Fire Department 911  
Animal Control 508-888-1186  
Cape Wildlife Center 508-362-0111

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National Park Service, Eastern Coyote Research

## WILDLIFE INFORMATION

# Eastern Coyote



## TOWN OF PLYMOUTH

Department of Marine &  
Environmental Affairs  
11 Lincoln Street, Plymouth, MA 02630  
(508) 747-1620 x198  
[www.plymouth-ma.gov](http://www.plymouth-ma.gov)

## Description

The Eastern Coyote (*Canis latrans*) is a large land mammal common to southeastern Massachusetts. The typical adult coyote weighs between 30 and 60 pounds, is four to five feet long, and has coloring ranging from grey or silver to a mottled brownish-red. During the winter, a thick coat with warm underfur makes them appear significantly larger than they are.



## Habits

Coyotes are a crepuscular animal, meaning they are primarily active during dawn and dusk, explaining why these are the times they are frequently encountered. However, it is not uncommon or cause for concern to see or hear them outside of these hours.

Coyotes adapt well to a changing environment, which is why they are a prevalent animal found throughout New England. They can be found thriving in dens in forested uplands, open grassy areas, marshes, and river valleys. Because of all the forested lands that many neighborhoods in town abut and the miles of utility lines crisscrossing the area, coyotes can be found in nearly all parts of the town.

Their diet is omnivorous; they feed primarily on small animals such as hares and squirrels, deer, fruits, and insects. However being that they are opportunists, they will also not hesitate to find their way into garbage or pet food left outside.

## Lifecycle

Coyotes are extremely social animals. During the January through March breeding season, they are quite vocal, and their calls are a common night-time sound. They are lifelong monogamous animals that will rear between four and eight pups in May after a 60-66 day gestation period, and parents will raise the pups together with the help of older offspring. Within a year, pups will either leave and find their own territory, or remain with their parents in a small pack. Different calls may be heard such as pups 'yipping', territorial barks, howls calling the pack together, and a combination of all three once the pack reunites. Once in adulthood, coyotes will live for approximately 14 years.

## Hunting

Per Massachusetts State Law and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW), there is a designated open coyote hunting season. While the exact dates vary each year, it is typically December to March with no daily bag limits. Please consult with the DFW for exact dates, licensing fees, restrictions, and additional information. Please note that all state hunting requirements, rules, and regulations must be observed while hunting within Plymouth town limits.

## Importance of Coyotes

Coyotes are part of the natural ecosystem in southeastern Massachusetts, where each species plays an important role. Coyotes, as a top predator, help to control populations of deer and rodents that would otherwise decimate crop and vegetative communities. Research has shown that in areas where coyotes are removed, rodent populations boom and will destroy private and commercial crops. In order for ecosystems to self-regulate, top predators are necessary to ensure other animals do not populate out of control.

## Coyotes and Wolves

It is important to note that Gray Wolves (*Canis lupus*) have not lived in New England for approximately 150 years since they were extirpated from the region. They require vast territories and ample prey to support large packs; features southeastern Massachusetts does not offer. While they occasionally are spotted in the northern reaches of the region, a successful breeding pair has not been observed in New England for decades. The Gray Wolf bears a close resemblance to coyotes; the following are ways to differentiate the two:

Coyotes are significantly smaller than wolves. Wolves range from 50 to 100 pounds, and are five to six feet long.

Coyotes have a slender pointed snout, whereas a wolf's snout is large and blocky.

Coyotes have large pointed ears that stand erect. In many cases, an average coyote's ears may be larger than that of the biggest wolves.

Coyotes are more slender overall than wolves, (this is especially prevalent in their legs) and have bushier tails that are held low to the ground.



Gray Wolf



Eastern Coyote