

Coyote (*Canis latrans*)



Taxonomy:

Family Canidae. Nineteen subspecies are recognized, including *Canis latrans lestes* from the Wasatch region.

Description:

Distinguished by its dog-like form, and reddish-brown color.

Total length: 1-1.3 m; Tail: 300-394 mm; Hind foot: 177-220 mm; Weight: 7-20 kg.



Distribution:

Alaska and western Canada south through the US and Mexico. In recent decades, the range has expanded eastward to include eastern Canada and the eastern seaboard states. Common along the Wasatch Front.

Ecology and diet:

Coyotes are highly adaptable, occurring in nearly all terrestrial habitats. They are generalist predators, hunting any available prey ranging from mice to large mammals, but also consuming insects, carrion, and a wide variety of plant matter. Social structure is variable, probably as a function of available resources, but most often involves

small packs consisting of a mated pair and their dependent young of various ages. Packs are highly territorial, actively defending resources against other groups. Social communication involves a wide variety of vocalizations as well as scent marking. They are often heard yelping during the evening, and may be seen foraging during the day.

Life History:

Coyotes have a monogamous mating system. Pairs generally produce a single litter annually. Mating occurs in mid-winter. Litters averaging 6 pups are born in underground dens following a gestation of 58 to 65 days. Pups are weaned at 5 to 7 weeks, and sexual maturity is achieved at 9-10 months. Maximum longevity in the wild is 10 years.

References: Zeveloff 1988; Bekoff 1999.