

Life History of the Coyote

LHOTC022604

The coyote is a member of the family Canidae, which includes wolves and foxes. Coyote populations began to expand rapidly into the southeast during the 1970's due to eradication of the red wolf and enhancement of habitat conditions through widespread timber harvest. Local release of coyotes for hunting also contributed to the expansion of coyote populations.



DESCRIPTION: Weight of a coyote in Alabama ranges from 20 - 46 pounds; the average weight of a female is 29 pounds and a male is 33 pounds. Coat color varies from almost pure gray to red to pure black. Typically, they are buff-yellow to reddish yellow to brown. The coyote's belly and throat areas can be light gray to white. The mane is lined with black tipped hairs along the back extending over the upper tail.

REPRODUCTION: Coyotes form pair bonds that may breed from year to year but not necessarily for life. Females have one estrus cycle annually, which lasts 4-5 days. Mating occurs in February to early March with a gestation period of 60-63 days. Litter size is 2-12 pups with an average of 4-6 pups.

HABITAT: Coyotes are habitat generalists and can survive in any habitat where food is available. They show no preference for any particular habitat. Home ranges vary from 2 - 55 square miles, although, a home range over 30 square miles is abnormal. Coyotes use a variety of places for den sites such as brush-covered slopes, rock ledges, steep banks, thickets, hollow logs and blow-downs.

DIET: Coyotes are omnivorous, feeding on a variety of animals and plants. Rodents, rabbits, and similar sized mammals, and carrion (dead animals) are common prey during the winter and spring. Fruits such as blackberries and persimmons along with fawn deer are preyed upon during the summer and fall. Coyotes are opportunistic feeders feeding on what is in abundance and readily available.

DISEASES: Common diseases among coyotes are canine distemper and sarcoptic mange. Parvovirus, rabies, hepatitis, and heartworm may also affect coyote populations.

Sources: Yarrow, G.K., and D.T. Yarrow. 1999. Managing Wildlife. Sweetwater Press. 11:243-246.
Research Findings – Coyotes (*Canis latrans*): www.cfr.msstate.edu/predator/rfcoyote.html

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