

Animals of the Chihuahuan Desert



Coyote

Physical Characteristics

The coyote has a long, bushy, black-tipped tail with pointed ears and a narrow-pointed face. Their fur can range from brown to grey and their bellies are white. They are often mistaken for a dog because of how closely they resemble domesticated dogs.

Diet

This animal is an omnivore and is known to eat almost anything from cactus fruit, mesquite beans, flowers, insects, rodents, lizards, rabbits, birds, snakes, deer, roadkill, and even garbage.

Habitat

The coyote can be found in a range of habitats from scrubs, grasslands, foothills, and even large cities. This animal's ability to efficiently adapt to the food it eats and the environment it lives is one of the main reasons why the coyote population has been able to thrive for so many years. When raising her pups, a mother coyote will keep the same den and only move her babies if the area becomes unsafe.

Senses

Coyotes have very good hearing. They use it to detect prey and avoid danger. The movement and position of their ears communicate their mood and standing within the group.

Predators

The main threat the coyote faces is disease, but also includes bears, mountain lions, and wolves. Humans can also be a threat as coyotes get more comfortable living closer to cities. Many coyotes get hit by cars when trying to cross roads.

Interesting Facts

- Coyotes have a unique hunting method called "mousing." Once they've cornered their prey (usually prey burrowed in a hole), the coyote will pounce with its front paws and dive its head into the hole.
- When coyotes stray too far from their den, they will 'sing' as a way to communicate and to keep track of the members of their family.
- When a coyote feels threatened their tail will become bushy and is held horizontally as a display of aggression.
- Coyotes are very vocal animals. They make different noises to communicate different needs. Howling is used to communicate presence in an area to other nearby coyotes. Yelping is often heard when coyote pups are playing with one another. Yelps can also be heard when communicating frustration within the group. Coyotes bark to show their dominance and use it when they feel threatened. Huffing is how parents call their pups.
- Coyotes are digitigrade. They walk with only their toes touching the ground.
- Coyotes can run up to 40 miles per hour and jump up to 8 feet in the air.