



(Photo: BC Parks)

2.6 Coyote (*Canis latrans* Say: ssp: *incolatus, lestes*)

Appearance and Size

Coyote fur is generally a tawny grey, darker on the hind part of the back where the black-tipped hair becomes wavy. Legs, paws, muzzle, and the back of the ears are more yellowish in colour; the throat, belly, and the insides of the ears are whiter. The tail, darker on top and



(Stock Photo)

lighter on the underside, is lightly fawn-coloured towards the tip, which is black. The coyote's fur is long and soft and well suited to protect it from the cold. Because it is light-coloured in winter and dark in summer, it blends well with the seasonal surroundings. The coyote's ears are wide, pointed, and erect. It has a tapering muzzle and a black nose. Unlike most dogs, the top of the muzzle on coyotes forms an almost

continuous line with the forehead. The yellow, slightly slanting eyes, with their black round pupils, give the coyote a characteristic expression of cunning. The canine, or pointed teeth are remarkably long and can inflict serious wounds. The neck is well furred and looks oversized for the body. The typical male coyote weighs from 9 kg to 23 kg, has an overall length of 120 cm to 150 cm, including a 30 cm to 40 cm tail, and stands 58 cm to 66 cm high at the shoulder. The female is usually four-fifths as large.

Life History

Coyotes appear to be monogamous, and couples may remain together for several years. Both sexes can breed at one year of age under good conditions,



(Photo: Bryan Harry, US National Park Service)

although both sexes usually breed somewhat later in life. The mating occurs mainly during February and March. Gestation lasts from 2 months. On average, the female bears three to seven pups, covered with fine brown fur, whose eyes remain closed for the first eight or nine days. Weaning, or making the transition from the mother's milk to other food, begins about one month after birth. The adults then feed the pups by regurgitating half-digested food. At about three weeks of age, the pups begin to romp around under the adults' watchful supervision. When fall comes, the young coyotes may leave their parents to claim their own territory. If there is an abundant food supply, pups may stay with the adults to form packs, or clans.



(Photo: Jim Peaco, US National Park Service)

Abundance and Distribution

The coyote is one of the few mammals whose range is increasing, despite extensive persecution by people. In British Columbia, the coyote still inhabits its traditional habitats, the aspen parkland and short- and mixed-grass prairie in the Peace River. (Map 2.6) However, it has spread south and west into the mountains, and the southern and northern Interior. Coyotes are now found even in urban centres on the British Columbia Mainland, including Vancouver.

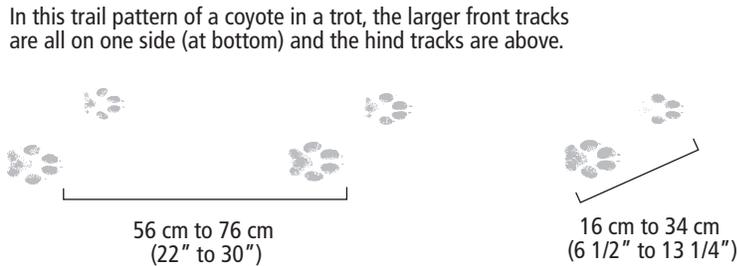
Text and map adapted from: Canadian Wildlife Service, 1990.



(Stock Photo)



front track
about
7 cm (2 3/4") long



Adapted from: McDougall (1997); Shomon (1969) and Sheldon and Hartson (1999).



(Photo: BC Ministry of Transportation)

Characteristic Features



(Photo: Leonard Sielecki, BCMoT)



(Photo: Leonard Sielecki, BCMoT)

Map 2.6

