

**Co-Existing with Coyotes
P.A.C. Kit**

**A Coyote Information Package for
Parent Advisory Councils**



Photo by Martin Passchier

**Stanley Park Ecology Society
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Co-Existing with Coyotes Parent Advisory Councils Kit

Although incidents between coyotes and children are extremely rare, it's important that parents, school staff, and children alike understand and are prepared for encounters with coyotes. This kit has been developed to provide Parent Advisory Councils with a better understanding of Vancouver's urban coyote population, advice on how to reduce the potential of conflict between people and coyotes, and information on how to prepare children in case of a coyote encounter.

The kit contains:

- Natural history information and common questions and answers on coyotes,
- Coyote encounter advice,
- Back yard attractants and blueprints for home-made coyote deterrents,
- Schoolyard coyote attractants to avoid, and preparation plan in the event of an encounter.

The information in the kit allows parents and teachers to provide practical advice to students and school staff regarding coyote encounters and deterrents. It also helps to develop a clear understanding of what coyotes are, and how urban environments support these adaptable creatures. A summary of Coyotes 101, a 30 minute school-wide multimedia auditorium presentation delivered by Co-Existing with Coyotes staff, is included in the PAC Kit as well. For further information or to arrange a presentation at your school, please contact the Stanley Park Ecology Society at 604-681-9453.

Sincerely,

Greg Hart

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Coyotes 101 – An Auditorium Presentation

Coyotes 101 has been created to provide important coyote information to a large audience of children in a short time period. The presentation aims to enable students to identify a coyote, recognize urban coyote attractants and learn what to do if a coyote is encountered. The main messages are reinforced by classroom activities provided by CWC prior to and following the presentation.

Theme

Coyotes are intelligent mammals that are well adapted to living in close proximity to people in urban areas. Children and adults alike should be aware that coyotes live in their neighbourhoods and be prepared for a coyote encounter.

Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge:* Awareness of effective coyote encounter behaviour
Coyotes have adapted to human environments throughout North America
Coyotes are highly social wild animals
- Skills:* Identifying a coyote
Being prepared for a coyote encounter, use of coyote deterrents
Recognizing and mitigating coyote attractants in cities
- Attitude:* Coyotes live in the city because the habitat supports them
Coyotes are wild animals and part of our natural world
Coyotes and people can coexist without conflict

Maximum audience: 350 students

Length: 30 minute presentation

Cost: \$225

Register Your School: Call 604-681-9453 or email coyotes@stanleyparkecology.ca

Auditorium Presentation PLO Learning Outcomes

Primary

- Describe the appearance and behaviour of a variety of animals.
- Determine the requirements of healthy animals.
- Identify similarities and differences among animal species.
- Describe structures that enable animals to survive in different environments.
- Demonstrate knowledge of what animals need to survive.

Intermediate

- Relate the structure and behaviour of local organisms to their survival in local environments.
- Compare and contrast the sensory systems of humans with those of animals.
- Classify animals according to their internal and external features.
- Describe ways in which species interact with each other.

Coyote Facts

- Coyotes can be identified by their big ears pointing up, bushy tail pointing down, slim muzzle, white chin strap, and slender build (see photo below).
- Coyote fur can be many colours from grey, brown, red, black, and tan.
- Urban coyotes in Vancouver weigh 9 to 16 kg (20 – 35 lbs).
- Coyotes can reach speeds of 65 km/hr and trot comfortably at 30 km/hr.
- Urban coyotes are opportunistic omnivores, feeding mainly on rodents (75%) including rats, mice and squirrels but also garbage, fruits, compost, berries, fish, insects and more.
- Coyotes are native to the grasslands and deserts of southwestern parts of the United States and began to spread throughout North America following European settlement.
- There are 19 subspecies of coyotes ranging from Panama to Alaska.
- Coyotes from Eastern North America tend to be larger than western coyotes as they are said to have bred with wolves historically.
- Urban environments satisfy most criteria for ideal coyote habitat.
- Coyotes are not naturally nocturnal, but have adapted to come out mainly at night in cities to avoid people.
- Coyotes only use a den during the pup rearing season in the spring (April – July)
- Coyotes were first spotted in Vancouver in the late 1980's.

For more coyote facts please visit our website at www.stanleyparkecology.ca



Photo by Martin Passchier

Common Coyote Questions

Connecting People With Nature

What should I do if a coyote approaches me?

- Children and adults alike should be **BIG, BRAVE and LOUD**
- BIG: Stand up tall, put arms over your head
- BRAVE: Stand your ground, don't run away and be confident and assertive, throw rocks, sticks or objects towards the coyote
- LOUD: Shout "Go Away Coyote" in a deep, loud voice

What should I do if the coyote keeps approaching me?

- Do not turn away or run.
- Continue to exaggerate the above actions, be more aggressive
- Do not corner it, or chase it if you suspect pups are nearby
- Keep constant eye contact with the coyote and continue to move towards other people, a building or an area of activity.

I've seen coyotes moving through my yard a lot recently. Why?

Regular coyote presence in your backyard is a result of a nearby food source. The coyote may be finding a meal in your yard, your neighbour's, or at a house down or across the street from you. Whether intentional or not, someone in your neighbourhood is providing a food source for coyotes. Talking with your neighbours about recognizing and removing the following coyote attractants will reduce the potential of having coyotes in your backyard:

- Pet food stored or pets being fed outside.
- Accessible garbage bins and compost.
- Fruit and berries fallen from trees or on ground.
- Rodent habitat: Neglected sheds, garages, and yards (eg. maintaining bird feeders and fallen seed regularly).

How can I discourage coyotes from visiting my backyard?

- React if you spot a coyote in your backyard. Coyotes respond to authoritative behaviour and are frightened by aggressive gestures, loud noises and large forms.
- Choose a deterrent you are comfortable with: wave hockey sticks or brooms at them, throw stones, balls or tins beside them, clang pots and pans in their direction, use a powerful garden water hose or Super Soakers (high volume and range water guns), or use bear or dog spray.
- Eliminate any potential food sources; if there is a regular coyote food source in one yard on your block, there will be coyotes active throughout the neighbourhood.
- Work with your neighbours, don't stop at your property line!

Feeding Coyotes is Against the Law

Feeding coyotes is a criminal offence in British Columbia. According to section 33.1 of the BC Wildlife Act, people feeding coyotes can encounter penalties ranging from a \$345 ticket to a maximum \$50,000 fine.

- An indifferent attitude towards a coyote in your yard has a similar effect as feeding. Acts of indifference towards coyotes in your backyard teach them that they are accepted and welcome there.
- Build high fences (> 2 meters) which must be flush to the ground.

How can I prepare my child for potential coyote encounters?

- Teach them to identify a coyote by key features (big ears point up, bushy tail points down, no collar or leash)
- Tell them to be BIG, BRAVE and LOUD in coyote encounters
- Have deterrents in several places around your yard.
- Make a portable deterrent for your child if there are regular coyote sightings in your area.
- Give them confidence by keeping the risk that coyotes pose in an accurate perspective (see chart).

<i>Leading Causes of Child Hospitalization in British Columbia</i>		
Cause of Injury	Age Group	Number per Year
Hot Substances	4 and under	104
Accidental Poisoning	4 and under	205
Falls	14 and under	2125
Struck by Object	14 and under	392
Statistics from British Columbia Ministry of Health: "Leading Causes of Hospitalization due to Unintentional Injuries." Project No.: 1999-067		
Dog Bites	All Ages	88
Statistics are an annual average from 1985/86 to 1992/93 from British Columbia Ministry of Health: Hospitalization due to dog bites (overnight stay minimum). Project E906.0		
Coyote (1985 - July 2001)	All Ages	0.14
In each of the three cases prior to July 4 th , 2001 in which coyotes were destroyed after biting a human, each coyote had been deliberately fed by people.		

How can I keep my cat safe?

- Keep your cat indoors permanently.
- Construct an outdoor pet run.
- The more time your cat is outdoors the greater the risk it faces, not only from coyotes, but also from raccoons, cars, domestic dogs, parasites and diseases.

How can I keep my dog safe?

Medium and large dogs aren't typically at risk from coyote attacks; however, coyotes are curious and may want to play or lure your dog away. Small dogs on the other hand, coyotes see as a food item. To keep your dog safe:

- Supervise it at all times if it is outside.
- Make sure your pet is off leash in enclosed areas only.
- Walk your dog (on leash) with a friend, in high pedestrian traffic areas and times.
- Avoid long stretches of bushy paths and roads along abandoned properties.
- If you notice a coyote approaching you when walking your small dog, gather it in your arms or keep it as close to you as possible and move towards an active area.
- If your dog (of any size) is off leash, ensure your dog has immediate recall response.
- Never encourage or allow your dog to interact or "play" with coyotes.
- Prepare and take a deterrent (coyote shaker, stick, rocks, dog spray, etc.) with you on your walk.

Reducing Schoolyard Coyote Attractants

Human-made urban areas are as ideal as a coyote's native habitat - the rodent filled grasslands of the South and Mid-west United States. Coyotes live in our neighbourhoods because our environment is as convenient and suitable for coyotes as it is for people. For this reason coyotes often visit parks, playgrounds and schoolyards within our communities.

Some coyote attractants can be minimized by simple preventative measures. Others can only be dealt with by informing school staff and students about the reasons why coyotes are in the neighbourhood, and preparing them for coyote encounters.

Why do coyotes visit schoolyards?

Food

Litter: Half eaten sandwiches, apple cores and junk food are commonly visible near and around schools and playgrounds. These not only provide a direct meal for the omnivorous coyotes, but encourage and support the rodent population, which is the main component of the urban coyote diet.

Action: Initiate a school garbage patrol. A small group of responsible older students spend the first 10 minutes after lunch, with an adult lunch supervisor or teacher, collecting food and rubbish left on the school ground.

Outdoor Garbage: If the schoolyard (or neighbouring) garbage bins are open topped or if large dumpsters are left open overnight, a whole ecosystem is being attracted to the school. Small rodents like mice and rats attract larger predators like raccoons and coyotes.

Action: Empty all outdoor garbage bins before nightfall daily. Consider requesting the school invest in sealed garbage cans, or at least with hinged lids. Ensure large dumpsters are kept closed overnight.

Rat Habitat: Urban areas encourage and support immense rat and mouse populations by providing inexhaustible rubbish supplies for food and innumerable nesting sites in dilapidated or abandoned properties, warehouses, factories, sheds and carports. Rats nest year round and will make homes in locations they find warm, close to a food source, and safe. These can be in basements, boiler rooms, crawl spaces, storage spaces or under porches, stairways and portables at schools.

Action: Monitor and react to areas of rat and mouse activity. Avoid the use of poisons to control rodents as they often find their way into pets and other animals.

Location

Neighbours: Urban schools have a wide variety of neighbours. Some schools back on to green spaces like regional parks, golf courses or ravines. Others have housing complexes, shopping facilities or industrial or commercial ventures as neighbours.

Action: Contact your neighbours (business operators, Park Board, house owners) regarding the importance of a neighbourhood effort in deterring coyotes and the sharing of information. Private residences and housing complexes can help by not feeding pets outside, having secure composts and garbage bins, maintaining their entire property and collecting any fallen fruit from yard trees. Commercial and industrial neighbours can help by the proper disposal and storage of their garbage, and rodent population monitoring.

Extended periods of quiet: Despite the initial perception of schoolyards as noisy and very active places, for long periods of time they are quiet and almost devoid of activity. Schoolyards are full of bustle and voices immediately before and after the school day as well as during lunch hours and recess. After the school day ends, the number of people active on school grounds diminishes sharply to a small group on the playground and perhaps another group on a field or basketball court. Once dusk sets in, the grounds are usually deserted and tend to be filled with food scraps. Schoolyards are far less active on weekends and school holidays as well. These consistent periods of relative quiet are perfect for coyotes to visit a regular and generous food source.

Action: There is no real direct action to this problem. Crime deterring motion lights may have some effect on coyotes' nocturnal visits. School engineering and maintenance staff on site during non-school hours should be adept and comfortable using coyote deterrents to frighten coyotes off the property.

General Action

The best method of reducing the potential for conflict between children and coyotes is through education. Provide schoolchildren with an understanding of coyotes, what they are, how the urban lifestyle supports them, and what to do if they encounter a coyote, not only at or en route to school, but under all circumstances.

Coyote Encounter Preparation

The most effective method of reducing potential conflicts between coyotes and children is preparation. The schoolyard should be prepared by removing or limiting coyote attractants and students and staff should be prepared for encounters with coyotes. If there are regular coyote sightings near or on school property, children need to know:

1. **Encounter behaviour:** ways to safely end encounters with a coyote
2. **The urban coyote lifestyle:** how coyotes live and are supported by habitat in the city
3. **Coyote natural history:** how to identify a coyote and respect their wild nature

One of the greatest threats to a child when in the presence of danger is their own panic. A child's fear of the unknown is far greater than their fear of the understood. Similarly, a child's fear of what they perceive or imagine urban coyotes to be diminishes when they understand coyotes better and are prepared to behave in an effective manner.

MAKING THE PLAN:

1. Sketch a layout of the school property.
2. Mark coyote attractants and access points on the map.
3. Select and mark specific areas on school grounds to serve as coyote encounter "destinations".

Target destinations would serve as an area which children could move towards in the event they encounter a coyote or if a signal (distinct bell ring) were given during periods of outdoor school activity. The areas should be active, have high public visibility and multiple paths leading towards them. "Destinations" should be clearly visible and accessible from areas in which coyote encounters are most likely to occur. They would also allow for instant access to a school building (main, portable, etc.) during school hours and could have a number of accessible coyote deterrents (broom, sticks, old tennis balls) on site.

4. **Ensure children, teachers and other school staff and volunteers are familiar with the following coyote encounter behaviour for situations both on and off school property.**

Appear as aggressive as possible.

Throw any available objects towards the coyote.

Shout at the coyote in a loud deep voice.

Maintain eye contact with the coyote.

Move towards an active area.

**Report any aggressive coyotes to the Ministry of Environment at
1-800-663-9453**

Home Made Coyote Deterrents

The following home-made deterrents are simple ideas that have proven effective in frightening coyotes. Coyotes have also been scared off properties by:

- shouting in a deep and loud voice while displaying aggressive behaviour.
- waving brooms and hockey sticks.
- throwing basket and tennis balls and other objects.
- clanging pots, pans and metal garbage lids.
- spraying vinegar in a super soaker.
- using dog and bear spray.

The two following deterrents have worked well by older children. By having a physical object on which to focus their energy and fear, children are less likely to panic and more likely to act in an effective manner. The main reason these objects have frightened coyotes is the aggressive behaviour in which they are used. Remember that individual coyotes have had different experiences. A coyote which has been regularly eating apples in a backyard for a month will react differently than a coyote in a yard for the first time. If a coyote does not respond to the deterrents, the actions should be continued and exaggerated. Do not run from coyotes.

The Can Clanger

Materials:

Five or six empty tins or cans
A piece of strong string or rope
A can opener

Instructions:

Remove the labels from all the tins.
Make a small hole in each tin with the can opener.
Thread the tins on the piece of rope.
Tie the two ends of the string or rope together.



Using the Can Clanger

If a coyote is on your property, lounging underneath a tree, or feeding upon your compost, it is important the coyote realizes it is not welcome there.

Walk towards the coyote and appear as aggressive as possible. Shake or throw the can clanger at the coyote while shouting at it in a deep, loud voice. Don't stop at your property line. A coyote in your neighbour's yard is the same as one in your own.



The Coyote Shaker

Materials:

- Pop can
- 5 pennies or small bolts
- Aluminium foil
- Duct tape

Instructions:

- 1) Place the pennies in the can.
- 2) Cover the opening with tape.
- 3) Cut a piece of foil and tape it around the can.



Using the Shaker:

Shake the tin aggressively at the coyote using your arm's full motion while shouting in a deep, loud voice.

The shaker scares the approaching coyote through:

The aggressive hand motions and
Loud noises



It is important for children to be comfortable using the deterrent. If there are regular coyote sightings around the schoolyard, rehearse encounter behaviour with role play in pairs, small groups and as a class until each child is prepared to use a deterrent and behave in an effective manner. Different children and adults are comfortable using different deterrents. Encourage the use of the deterrent most comfortable for each person.

Co-Existing with Coyotes PAC Input

1) What mediums do you consider most effective in educating children about coyotes?

- classroom presentations web site / phone line other - please list
 community environmental fairs discussions with parents

2) What mediums do you consider most effective in educating adults about coyotes?

- community environmental fairs brochures / newspaper articles organization/club/group presentations
 website / phone line public forums other - please list

3) Prioritize the following education themes and messages:

- how to react when face to face with a coyote don't feed wildlife pet manners / habits
 methods of deterring coyotes from backyards recognizing coyotes / understanding coyote natural history

4) Prioritize the following audiences in order you believe deserving of program emphasis:

- elementary and secondary schools community organizations and groups open public forums other - please list

5) What are your measures of success for Co-Existing with Coyotes?

- reduction in number of coyote and human conflicts number of people informed by contact with Co-Existing with Coyotes reduction in number of coyote complaints to frontline organizations other - please be specific

6) What limitations / challenges do you see with Co-Existing with Coyotes?

7) Please add any additional comments, suggestions or critiques by email or on the reverse of this page.

Please e-mail your input to coyotes@stanleyparkecology.ca