

STANLEY PARK ECOLOGY SOCIETY

Press Release

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Reducing Conflicts During Coyote Breeding Season

SPES offers Vancouverites tips for everyone's safety as coyotes expect pups

Vancouver, BC—The coyote breeding season has just begun, when we prepare for an increase in interactions between people and urban coyotes. Stanley Park Ecology Society's *Co-Existing with Coyotes* (CwC) program offers tips for the safety of people, pets, and coyotes.

Dannie Piezas, CwC Program Coordinator, says, "At this time, we expect more coyote sightings while they go into safeguarding mode. They are watching for threats in their territory, particularly other coyotes, but also dogs which they consider a similar threat. Coyotes usually avoid any confrontations, but will act more assertive and stand their ground, even when chased by a dog. They will also try to 'escort' you into leaving their territory, which people can mistake as predatory stalking."

The recent aggressive behaviour of coyotes towards people in Stanley Park is markedly different from normal, non-habituated coyote behaviour. Aggressive

Officers continue to monitor and respond as necessary to coyote conflict reports in Stanley Park.

As coyotes pair up to mate, establish their dens, and rear their pups, their behaviours are centred around keeping their families safe. Because of the higher stakes, they might not be as easy to spook. However, they are standing their ground to be protective, rather than aggressive. At this time, SPES advises people to:

1. **Avoid encounters altogether** – Consult the [CwC coyote sightings map](#) for routes with less coyote activity.
2. **Keep dogs on-leash** – Dog owners must especially prepare for potential encounters and be vigilant on walks. Leashing dogs allows more control over an encounter and prevents dogs from engaging with a coyote.
3. **Calmly leave the area if a coyote is seen** – Keep an eye on it and walk steadily away. If you have a dog, pick it up, if able. Even if a coyote follows for a time, they lose interest after a distance.
4. **Do not run from a coyote** – This may invite it to chase you.
5. **“Haze” a coyote that gets too close** – Hazing is a system of persistent and consistent response to scare coyotes. Stop to face it, raise your hands to look big, and make loud noises. Throwing items in their direction and using tools like umbrellas are also effective at spooking coyotes.
6. **Assess properties for food attractants and potential denning sites** – Remove any potential food sources like open trash or compost. Cut down overgrown vegetation and close off any openings that can be used as dens.

Late winter is the time for courtship and mating between an existing pair (coyotes being monogamous), while unpaired coyotes are seeking mates. Near the spring, females will dig dens or find pre-existing ones around dense vegetation or abandoned structures. Around April, litters of 4-7 pups are born and they begin to emerge from their dens in May. These pups are born blind and helpless, relying on both their parents for care and security.

The bottom line in co-existing with coyotes and other urban wildlife is to maintain healthy boundaries with them. This boundary is blurred when they see people or our spaces as sources of food. SPES stresses that it is important to never hand-feed them nor leave any food attractants in our properties, like loose garbage, open compost, pet food, bird seed, or fallen fruits. Reducing these attractants will keep coyotes out of our spaces so they may hunt for their preferred prey: mice, rats, and squirrels.

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Cats can be kept safe by supervising their outdoor time, walking dogs and cats on a leash, and keeping cats indoors or in an enclosed outdoor space. The [BC SPCA](#) and [Stewardship Centre for BC \(PDF\)](#) have great resources for cat owners to create rich and healthy lives for their cats inside.

Coyotes have been living in Vancouver since the 1980s and, with the absence of bigger predators and the abundance of food in the city, are likely here to stay. They are normally timid and elusive animals, hunting and feeding primarily on small mammals at any time of day. Their wariness towards people wanes when they are not treated like wildlife and learn to be comfortable around us.

SPES monitors coyote activity across Vancouver and posts all sightings online on an interactive map. If you do come across a coyote, report your sighting via their [online report form](#) or by calling (604) 257-6908 ext. 104. If a coyote shows aggression towards people, call the Conservation Officer Service Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) hotline at [1-877-952-7277](#) right away.

For more information about coyotes and tips on living alongside with them, visit the [CWC website](#).

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For more information or access to images, please contact:

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About Stanley Park Ecology Society

Founded in 1988, the non-profit Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES) promotes awareness of and respect for the natural world and plays a leadership role in the stewardship of Stanley Park through collaborative initiatives in education, research and conservation.

As a leading Park Partner of Vancouver Park Board, SPES operates the Stanley Park Nature House on Lost Lagoon, monitors urban wildlife, operates popular school and public education programs, and champions habitat enhancement projects in Stanley Park.

www.stanleyparkecology.ca

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pups, and coyotes. Established in 2001, in cooperation with the Vancouver Park Board and BC's Ministry of Environment, it is the longest standing coyote co-existence program in North America.

- Typically, coyote pups are born in April. Litter sizes are usually 4-7 pups but can change drastically depending on available food sources, territory and size of the pack.
- Although many coyotes live in family groups, rarely will more than one or two coyotes be seen together at once as they tend to hunt and travel alone or in pairs.
- Coyotes are an intelligent and highly adaptable animal, because of this they can be found all across North America including all major cities.
- Coyotes primarily eat mice, squirrels and rabbits (80% of their diet), but will take almost anything they can get a hold of. If available, they will eat fish, fruit, berries, nuts, eggs, and garbage. They have been known to prey on cats and small dogs, although this accounts for only 1-2% of an urban coyote's diet.
- The Coyote is a prominent character in First Nation's storytelling. Commonly portrayed as a trickster, Coyote often gets into mischief with spirits, humans and other animals.

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