

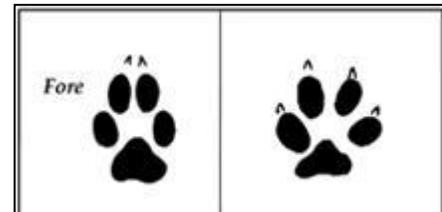
# Coyotes



**Background:** Coyotes have been in Florida since the 1970's and over the last 20 years, coyote numbers and distribution have increased. Coyotes' presence in the East can be due to its nonspecific food and habitat requirements, large litter sizes (average of six pups) and decreased competition from other predator species such as the wolf and panther. With such a general preference for certain foods and shelter, the coyote has also been able to adapt to benefit from human activities (Moore & Parker 1992, USFWS 1978, Gier 1975).

**Evidence:** Coyotes are members of the dog family with a body length between 39.4 and 59.8 inches, a 15.7 inch tail, and weigh between 24 to 37 pounds. Coyote tracks differ from dog track in that coyote track tend to be longer and narrower (Figure 1). Coyote scat is also easily identified by large composition of hair and an average length of four inches. Coyotes are more active at dawn and dusk (crepuscular), but can be seen almost anytime during the day or night. While howls of a coyote are common, they also yip and bark. Coyotes have very good eyesight, hearing, and sense of smell which help the coyote to hunt and survive. They are known to feed on rodents, rabbits, lizards, snakes, insects, grasses, fruit (watermelon, persimmons, and wild berries), grains, fish, and dead animals (Bekoff 1982, Gier 1975). Garbage and pet food left outside may also attract coyotes. Domestic pets, as dogs and cats, have been killed by coyotes. When food resources are plentiful, the number of breeding females and litter size increase.

Figure 1.



Difference in tracks of a coyote (left) and dog (right).

**Disease:** Of the dozens of diseases documented in coyotes several (such as rabies) can be transmitted to humans and/or livestock. Coyotes are hosts to at least 11 species of parasites such as lice, ticks, heart worms, whipworms, and lungworms (Bekoff 1982).

**What to do:** If coyotes approach humans this means they may have lost their fear of people and could bite, or they may be sick and carrying lethal rabies. Coyotes are generally shy of people, but coyotes who do not keep their distance should be hazed to reinforce their fear of humans. Killing or trapping coyotes is an option through wildlife trappers, but has proven ineffective for reducing coyote problems. The most effective method for dealing with coyotes is to learn to live with them and practice hazing methods when appropriate. More about coyote hazing can be found online at <http://bit.ly/hazingcoyotes>

#### Sources:

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