



Environmental Commission Newsletter

Township of Long Hill, County of Morris

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Coyote Population on the Rise in Long Hill Township

Over the past few years, numerous reports have come in of coyote sightings in the area and such reports have been increasing. Morristown has had sightings recently, and locally, Long Hill Road, Meyersville Road, the Great Swamp Swamp and Warren Township have reported sightings as well.

A coyote is a member of the genus *Canis* (dogs). They have the appearance of a small wolf, and are usually a gray color with orange hues around their head and shoulders. These animals are surprisingly intelligent and adaptable. Coyotes are pack hunters that work together to hunt animals that they otherwise would have trouble attempting to prey upon alone. They isolate prey, often juveniles, so that they can minimize defensive measures against them. Coyotes prey upon small mammals, deer, and everything in between, including birds, reptiles, and amphibians, but will also eat beetles and grubs. In the evening, their distinctive howls can be a good indicator of their proximity.

This is the time period when coyotes are raising their litters. They bear between three and nine pups during April and May, so interactions between coyotes and humans are most likely to occur as adults forage for food for the pups in the spring and summer.

While Coyotes are usually extremely wary of people, Bergen County has recorded two coyote attacks, most likely from rabid animals. For this reason, local residents should take the following steps to coexist with these animals.

- Coyotes, as with all wild carnivores, should never be intentionally fed.

- Pets should be kept indoors or, if outside, within an enclosed area. Additionally, they should be supervised when outdoors.
- Turn on outside lights at night and scan for unexpected wildlife.
- When walking your pet, keep it on a leash no more than 6 feet long. Bring a whistle or other noisemaker in case of an encounter with a coyote
- NEVER run from, or turn your back to, a coyote. Additionally, keep children and/or pets close to you to prevent them being isolated from you. If a coyote is too close to you make a loud noise, yelling and clapping. Make a display that enlarges your appearance, such as raising your arms. If it continues to approach throw sticks or large stones at it.
- Work with neighbors to ensure garbage and compost are properly stored and protected from scavengers. Ensure other possible coyote attractants are cleaned and removed, such as cleaning up after a barbeque or taking in uneaten pet food.

By taking sensible precautions humans can live in harmony with coyotes and other species.

Written by Matthew Dionisio

Long Hill Township Environmental Commission



Coyote photo taken from a backyard in Chatham