

## LIVING WITH COYOTES IN GHI

Coyotes are now statewide in Maryland, according to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Population assessments of Maryland's coyote population are underway. DNR expects that this analysis will closely mimic a recent analysis in Virginia, as Maryland and Virginia share similar habitat types and land use patterns. The analysis in Virginia verified an approximate 29% annual growth rate in its coyote population.

Coyotes are wild, territorial and opportunistic predators. They appear similar to a medium-sized German Shepherd weighing 25 to 35 pounds. Brown in color, they have thin bodies and a dog-like face. Coyotes provide a natural control of wildlife as they eat rabbits, rodents, geese eggs, road kill and groundhogs. Cats are a food source for coyotes as well. Coyotes also eat other small companion animals, birdseed and garbage. Coyotes can hunt in packs for larger game, such as deer and larger dogs in winter when other food is not plentiful. Larger dogs can be seen as competition from December to March during the coyote's breeding season. They generally avoid humans unless their dens are threatened.

When living with coyotes the following should be considered:

- Outdoor cats are at risk from coyotes. GHI Member Services can provide members with a handout detailing how to transition an outdoor cat indoors.
- Do not leave food outside for feral cats or other animals, especially at night, as coyotes will see this as a food source.
- Make sure your garbage is secured in trashcans with tight-fitting lids.
- Leash your dog. If your dog is off leash, a coyote may attack, although attacks on large dogs are rare.
- As coyotes can jump six foot high fences, do not leave companion animals unattended in fenced yards.
- While coyote attacks on humans are very rare, do not approach or knowingly feed coyotes as they may lose their natural fear of humans and may become aggressive.

A request was posted to the Greenbelters' list asking people who have seen or encountered coyotes in Old Greenbelt or GHI to email the GHI Companion Animal Committee Chair off-list. This request resulted in multiple email reports of coyotes, or animals whose descriptions fit the description of a coyote, being sighted around GHI and the city. Remember, if approached by a coyote, the important thing is to not panic and to use common sense. First try carefully retreating. If the coyote continues to approach, scream loudly and wave your arms. Anyone experiencing problems with coyotes or other wildlife species is encouraged to call DNR at (877) 463-6497.

### REFERENCES

The Humane Society, All Animals, *Coyotes Among Us*, Page 14, May-June 2012

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, *Living with Wildlife*, [http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/wildlife/living/living\\_with\\_coyotes.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/wildlife/living/living_with_coyotes.htm)

Lake County Forest Preserves, Frequently Asked Questions – Coyotes  
[http://www.lcfpd.org/docs/media\\_pub\\_25097.pdf](http://www.lcfpd.org/docs/media_pub_25097.pdf)

Photograph of a Coyote

