

Nature Notes

The Coyote



Once the first snow covers the ground in the Kimberley Nature Park, the tracks of the coyote along the trails show their frequent meanders as they hunt for food and shelter. When walking, the tracks are evenly spaced and approximately 25cm apart. At a trot, the front and rear paws are nearly parallel to each other. Scat found along the trails that is similar to a dog but full of hair is likely to be that of a coyote.



Photo: Steve Thompson US Fish and Wildlife Service

Coyote pups are birthed in the spring in dens. For the first three weeks, as their bodies mature in the den, they eat regurgitated food brought to them by their parents. They then begin to explore outside the den and by five weeks, have joined the pack. Packs consist of siblings and offspring and are usually 6 to 8 members.

Squirrels, hares, and mice are some of the mammals that the coyote will hunt. They can stalk quietly through the woods using their acute sense of smell to assist in finding food. They can hunt as individuals but also in groups if the prey is a larger animal like a deer. They are opportunistic and will use their climbing and digging skills in the pursuit of a meal.

Coyotes are varying shades of grey and brown and can look sleek or scruffy. They are approximately 76-86 cm long, not including their approximately 30 cm long tails. They weigh between 7 and 21 kg. A coyote would expect to live 10 years. Only about half a litter in any given year would be expected to survive through that the first year.

We're often aware of the presence of coyotes in the evening and at night when they are most likely to howl, yip, and bark to establish their territories and call to members of their pack. If you're out for an evening stroll in the Park, listen for other trail users!

Visit www.rockies.net/kimberley/naturepark for a hard copy or more information about Nature Park events.