Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) in Florida: the Good, the Bad, & the Ugly

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Coyote range expansion: eradication of wolves

Red wolf; photo courtesy of B. McPhee

Gray wolf; photo courtesy of USFWS
Coyote range expansion - conversion to an agricultural landscape
History of the spread of coyotes in Florida

- Brady & Campbell. 1983
- Wooding & Hardisky. 1990
- Scent Survey Data. 1997-99. (M. Main)
- Carcass Data. (M. Main)
- Personal Communication
- Furthest southern observation (Key Largo, 2011)
Coyote biology

- Omnivorous, highly adaptable
- Adults 25-40 lbs.
- Home range size: natural areas ~15 mi², urban areas ~3 mi²
- Mate in Winter
- Pups in Spring
- Litter size ~6 pups
- Both parents care for young

FWC trail camera photo- Big Cypress
Coyote diet study

- FWC stomach content preliminary results

Preliminary Findings
Frequency of Occurrence of Contents in Coyote Stomachs

- Mammal: 31%
- Other Veg: 22%
- Insect: 15%
- Mast: 10%
- Anthropogenic: 9%
- Avian: 6%
- Fish: 2%
- Herps: 1%
- Unknown: 4%
- Fish: 2%
Coyote diet study

Obvious dog food found in the stomach of coyote 1024 trapped in NAS Pensacola on 10/12/2011 (USDA)

Cooked chicken found in coyote 1081 hit by car in Pinellas county, unknown date
Coyote diet study

Stomach of coyote 1069 shot in Polk county on 9/18/2012 (D. Andrews, FWC) stained likely by American pokeweed

McDonald’s butter wrapper found in stomach of coyote 1074 (H. Jones, FWC) hit by car in Ocala National Forest 11/18/2012
Coyote diet study

Candy wrapper found in coyote 1051, trapped in St Joseph Peninsula State Park (USDA) on 4/15/2012

A total of 47 small mammals were found in the stomach of coyote 1012, shot in Morriston on 2/7/2012
Coyote diet study

Deer remains and likely black trash bag found in coyote 1007, trapped in Duval County on 2/1/2012 (USDA)

Palmetto seeds and aluminum foil were found in coyote 1063, trapped in Reedy Creek on 4/15/2012 (USDA)
Substantial amounts of insects found in the stomach of coyote 1052, trapped at NAS Pensacola on 4/16/2012 (USDA)
Actual weights of coyotes

FWC diet study-149 coyote carcasses collected statewide from 2011-2013
Coyotes in Florida: the Good?
Aesthetic values of wildlife
Control of smaller predators
Effects of coyotes as predators
Coyotes in Florida: the Bad?

FWC trail camera photo - Miami
Competition with native predators?
Florida panther (*Puma concolor coyri*)
Competition with native predators?

Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)
Coyote predation upon rare & endangered species
Coyotes in Florida: the Ugly?

...human conflicts

Photo courtesy of Beverley Batts- Panama City
Coyotes in Florida: the Ugly?

Coyotes have an undeserved public reputation

Common myths and misconceptions:

• Size
• Packs
• Coy-dogs/ Coy-wolves
• Disease
• Hollywood
  • Wiley coyote
Coyote depredation of livestock
Urban coyotes and pet loss

Photo courtesy of Dan Muccie - Estero
Dog attacks vs. coyote attacks

- Coyotes (USA and Canada during 1960-2006):
  - 3.5 attacks/yr.
  - 2 fatalities/46 yrs.
- Domestic dogs (USA):
  - 1,000 emergency room visits/day
  - 5 million cases/yr. require medical treatment
  - 176 fatalities during 2010-2014

www.dogsbite.org
Can we get rid of coyotes?

NO

- Eradication efforts
- Breeding dynamics
  - Territorial with high replacement
    - Adaptable and intelligent
      - Here to stay
Trapping Options and Definitions

- Live/Cage Trap – Any box style trap where the animal is completely contained within the trap (Have-A-Heart)

- Snare – A trapping device consisting of a noose designed to capture wildlife.

- Steel trap – Any mechanical device (other than a snare, household mouse traps or devices commonly used to take household and lawn nuisance rodents) designed and used to capture wildlife by seizing and holding a part of the body.
Prevent problems with coyotes-
Secure Attractants

- NEVER feed coyotes!
  - Anything that can attract a dog, cat or raccoon can attract a coyote
- Secure garbage
- Clean up pet food, fallen fruit & bird feeders
- Keep cats indoors
- Keep dogs on leashes & supervised outdoors (especially small dogs)
Prevent problems with coyotes - Hazing

- Human Dominance
- Rocks & sticks
- Whistles
- Pots & Pans
- Car & air horns
- “Coyote shaker”
- Motion sprinklers
- Water pistols
- Motion lights
- Firecrackers
- Bear spray
Coyotes in Florida: some facts

- Adult coyotes weigh 25-40 pounds
- Coyotes occur in every state and nearly every large city in the U.S.
- Attacks by coyotes on humans are exceedingly rare
- Coyotes will kill cats and small dogs
- Coyotes can carry rabies, but it is rare
Coyotes in Florida: some advice

- Never feed coyotes or any wild animal
  - It is illegal to feed coyotes in Florida!

- Prevent access to garbage and pet food

- Keep cats indoors, have small dogs on a short leash or in a well fenced yard

- Follow hazing recommendations to consistently frighten coyotes away

- If a coyote approaches, lift small pets and children off the ground and be prepared to defend yourself (never run)

Photo courtesy of Reinier Munguia- Lakeland
Coyotes in Florida: who should you contact when there is a problem?

- FWC SW Regional Office (863) 648-3200
- Nuisance Wildlife Trapper
Good?

Bad?

Ugly?

...or just trying to make it in a tough world?