Living with Coyotes in Illinois
Friend or Foe???

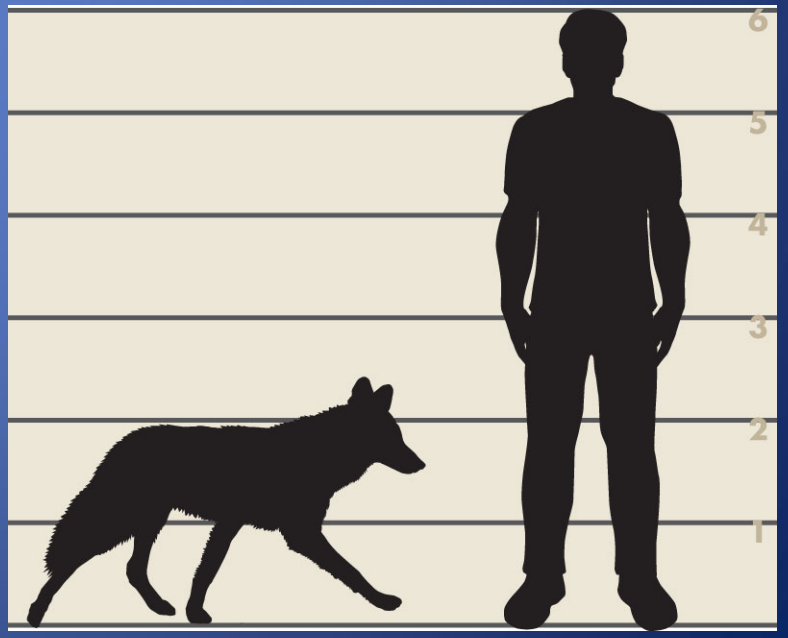
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Division of Wildlife Resources

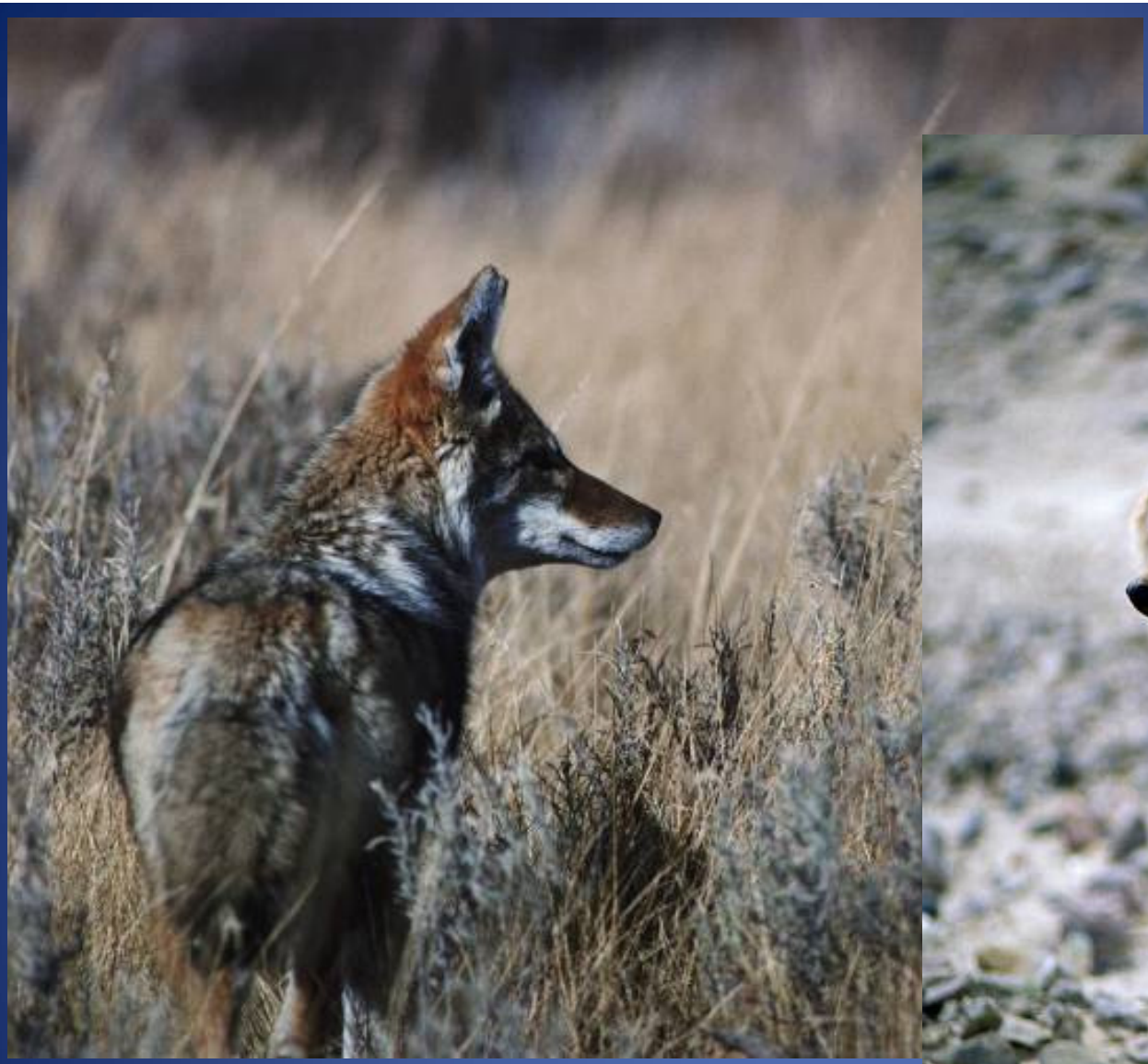
Intro

- Coyotes are valuable members of the wildlife community. They help keep populations of small mammals and rabbits under control.
- Illinois' largest remaining predator
  - Integral part of healthy ecosystem functioning
- There are many misconceptions about coyotes and their role in urban landscapes.
- National Stats
  - 4.5 million **dog** bites and 20-30 fatalities **annually**
  - Coyotes have bitten/attacked ~160 people in roughly the last ~30 years with 2 fatalities
- Illinois Stats: Glenview man bit while hand feeding and trying to take a picture with a coyote. Practice safe selfies.
  - This is the only ***confirmed*** bite/attack in Illinois.

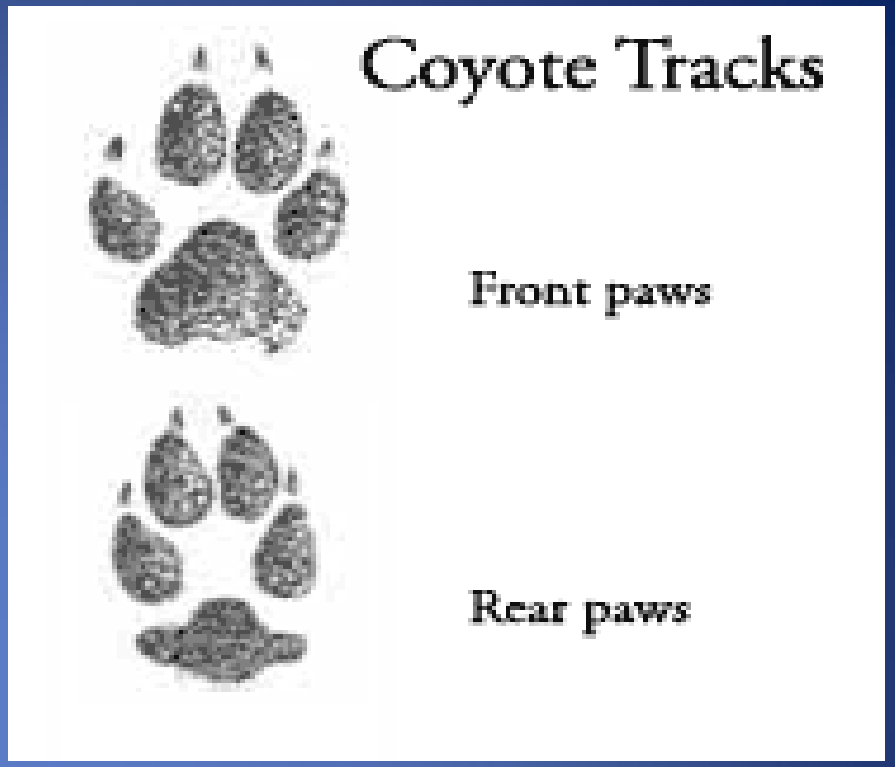
Basics- Physical Description

- Typically light gray to dull brown coat; outer hairs tipped with black
- 35 to 42 pounds (can reach up to 55 pounds in rare occasions) (fall and winter); 2 foot tall at the shoulder; 44 to 54 inches long including the 15 to 17 inch tail
- Tail carried below the level of the back





- Coat can vary from mostly black to nearly all gray or white; long and narrow snout; ears erect and pointed



Coyote Tracks

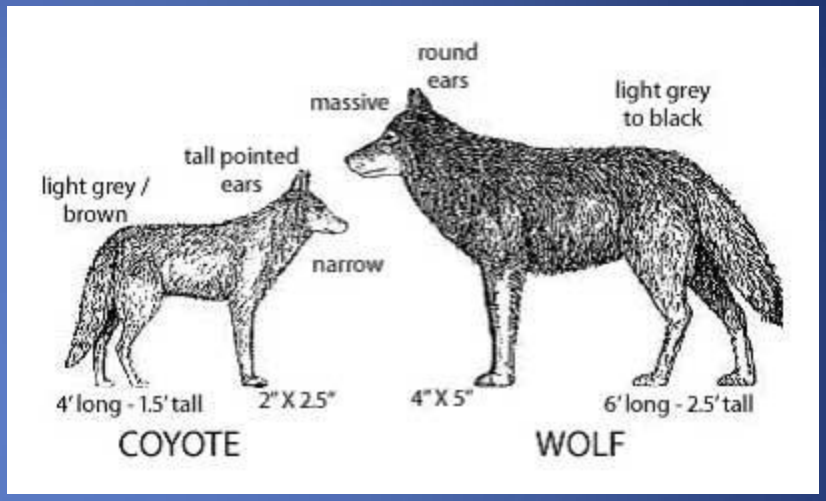
- The front paw track is larger (and often heavier imprinted) than the rear

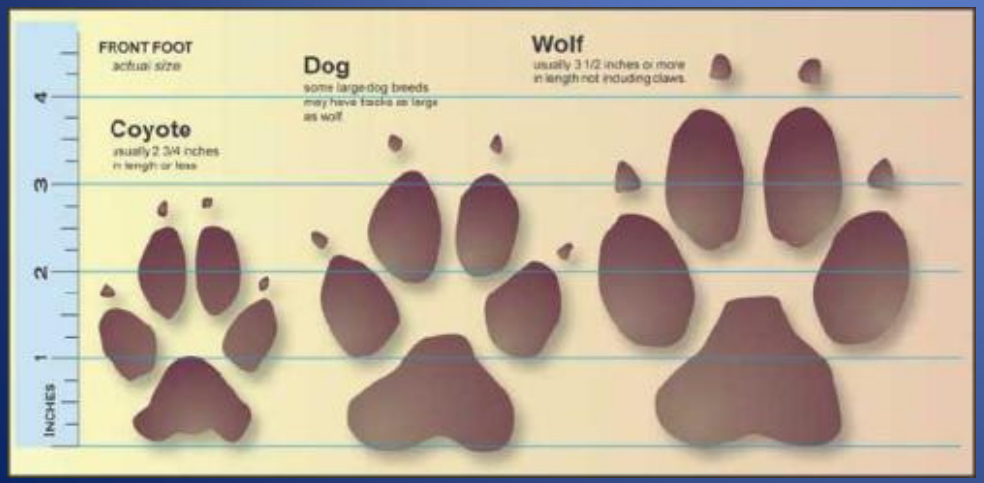
- The paw pads of the front paw appear to frown, while the rear paw pad leave a more rounded or lip shaped impression

- The placement of the front and rear prints appear somewhat close together.

Coyotes vs Wolves

- There have only been a few DNA confirmed wolves in Illinois.
- Thing to remember: Illinois does not have enough habitat to house breeding pairs of wolves. They are just passing through.

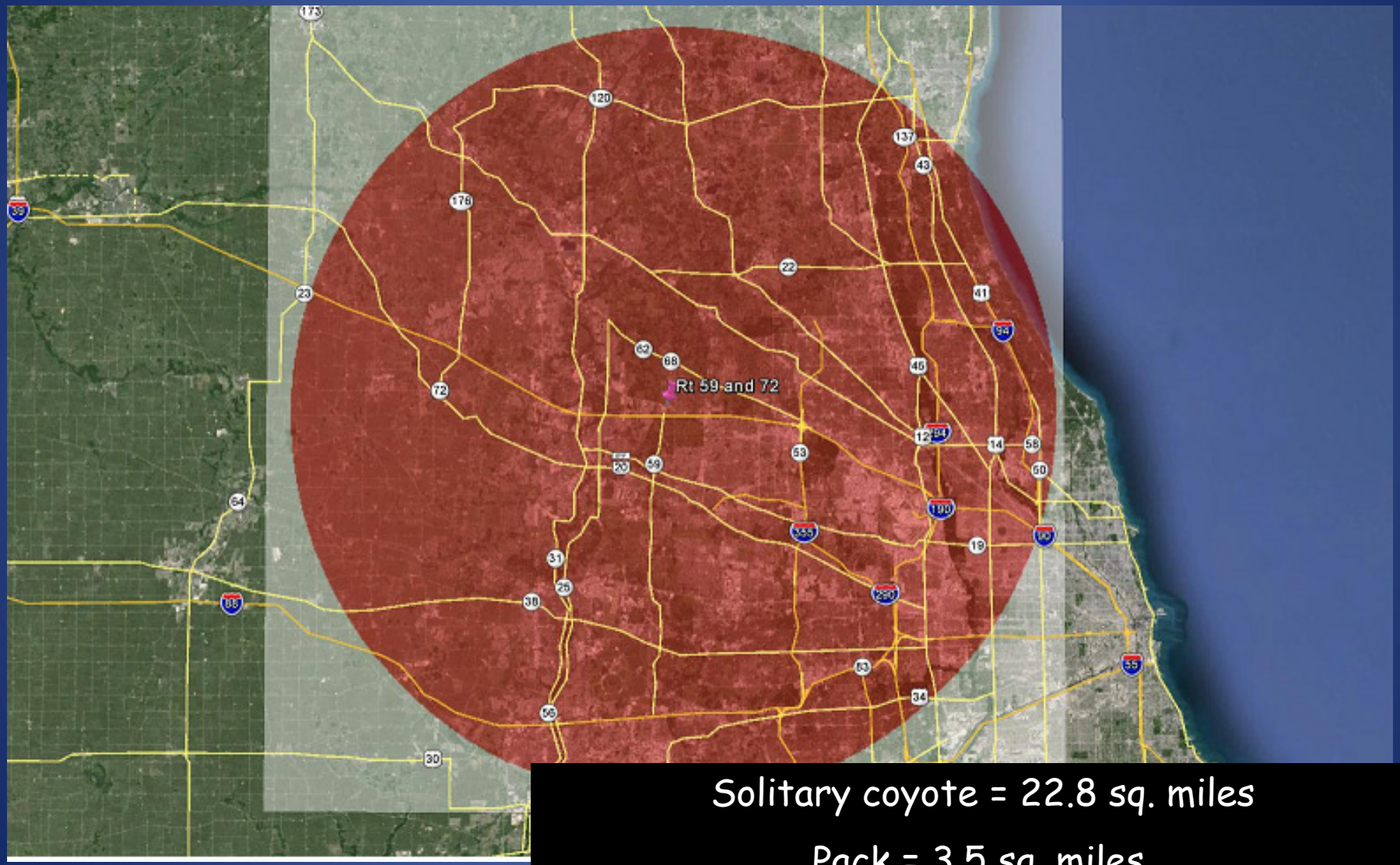




Coyote Basics- Habitat

- Semi-open country
  - Open grassy areas, shrubby areas, woods and marshes,
- Occur in all habitats, including urban and suburban areas
  - The landscape plantings of homes will attract wildlife, including wildlife species that coyotes eat

Basics- Home Range



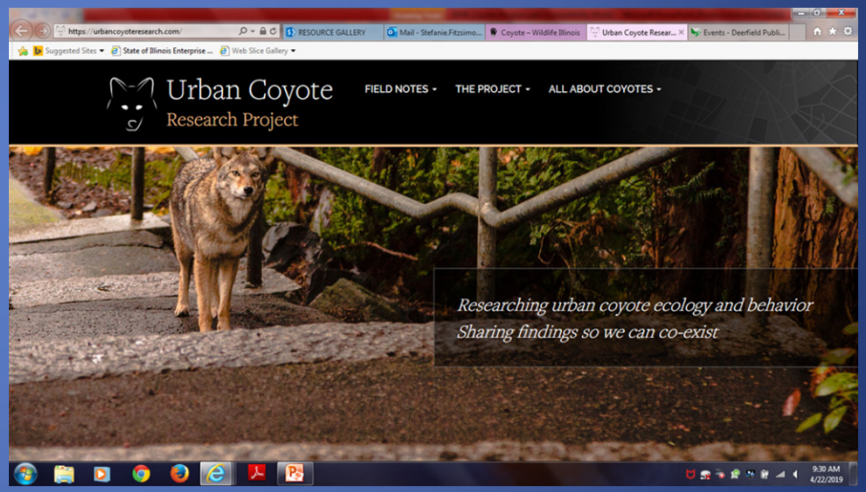
Solitary coyote = 22.8 sq. miles

Pack = 3.5 sq. miles.

Most pack coyotes reside in forest preserves.

Urban Coyote Project

- Research started in 2000 with more then 1242 urban coyotes collared to this date.
- Research:
  - Human/coyote conflicts
  - Coyote distribution
    - Home ranges
  - Family sizes
  - Behaviors



https://urbancoyoteresearch.com/

- Live solitary or as mated pairs
  - with their pups, or extended family
    - (pack = breeding pair and their young of the year and subordinate sub-adults)
- Average life span 3 to 4 years, as much as 13 years. #1 killer of coyotes = heartworms.
- Communicate by vocalizations, scent marking, body language.

Most active from dusk until early morning hours, **but can be seen during the day**. **Coyotes can become habituated to human activity.** Often described as "like ghosts."

Basics- Diet

Geese and their eggs

Mice

Wild fruit

Carrion

Voles (field mice)

Rabbits

Totally opportunistic

Colder temperatures and snow cover during the winter make finding prey more difficult. A coyote's home range can be up to 30 miles in diameter.

Coyote scat (with 6 inch ruler)

Coyotes eat all of their prey, including some hair. The indigestible hair passes through the coyote. The color of the scat will somewhat depend upon the color the hair from the meal.

Basics- Breeding

- Timeframe: February to early March
- Peek breeding on Valentines Day
- One litter per year
  - 4 to 9 pups born in a den during late April or May
- Family moves from den at 8 to 12 weeks

Public Health Concern

- Coyotes in Illinois are not considered to be a public health concern.
- Coyotes can be carriers of canine distemper, parvovirus, rabies and mange
  - These are diseases to which domestic dogs, cats and livestock may be susceptible.
- Mange and rabies are human threats but you must make physical contact with the animal.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources' (IDNR) roles:

- Educational – appreciation and awareness.
- Regulatory (Wildlife Code, 520ILCS5.1.3)
  - protection and management of wildlife and wildlife habitat; taking of wildlife (hunting and trapping); testing of commercial nuisance wildlife companies; issue licenses and permits
- Permits for the removal of wildlife are issued in cases of property damage, or public health or safety concern.
- We do not trap and remove wildlife.
  - Don't have the funds or the manpower
  - Talk to your legislator if you wish to see that changed

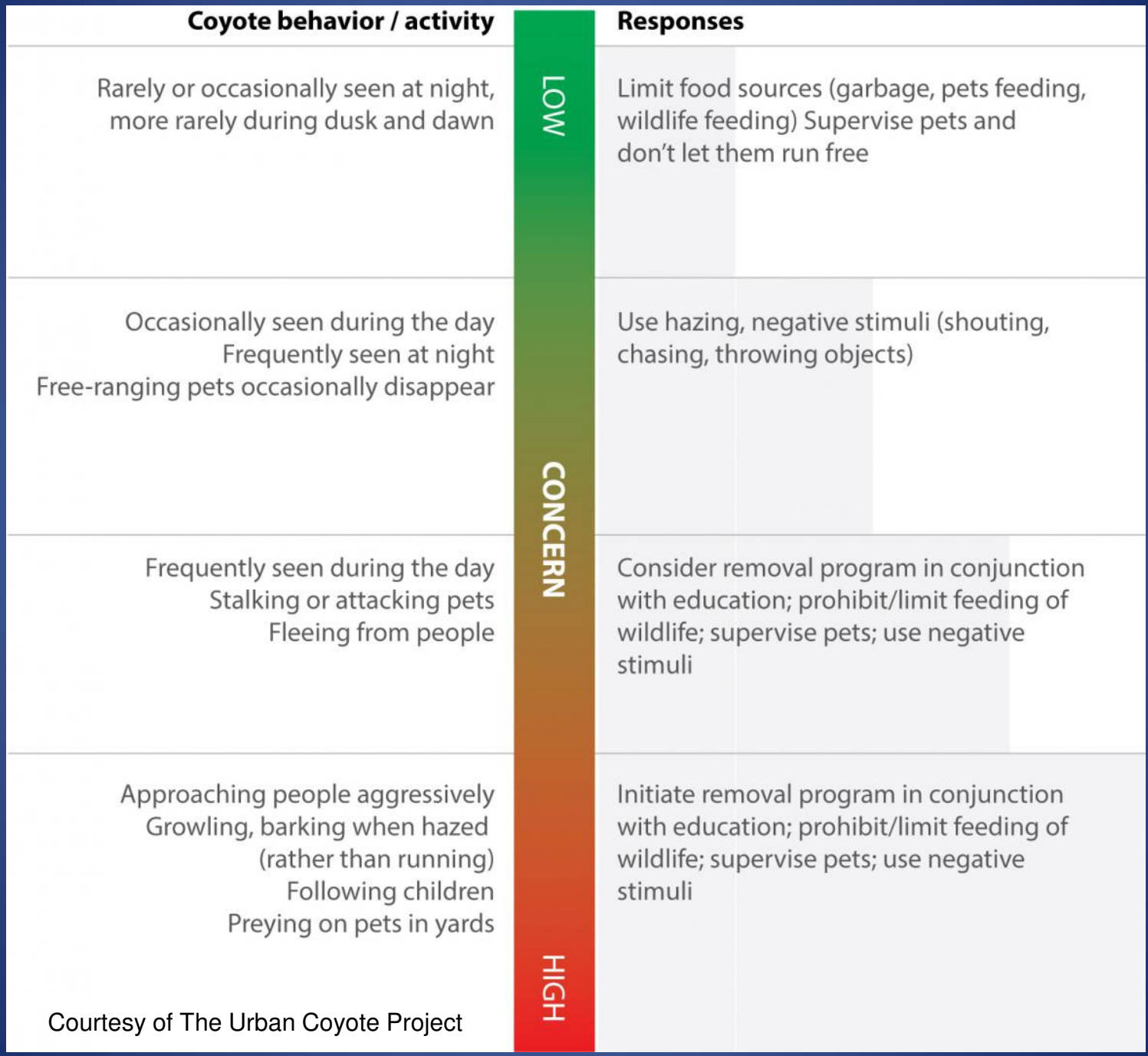
Coyotes and You

Solving "conflicts" with coyotes

Victim of society!!/

Courtesy of imgarcade.com

- Coyotes are a permanent fixture in Illinois' rural, suburban and urban areas.
- Chicagoland population hasn't changed. Behaviors have.
- Seeing a coyote(s) cross a backyard, golf course, road, etc. does not necessarily constitute a problem or a dangerous situation for humans or domestic animals. This is normal behavior.


Coyote behavior / activity
Responses
LOW
CONCERN
HIGH
Rarely or occasionally seen at night, more rarely during dusk and dawn
Limit food sources (garbage, pets feeding, wildlife feeding) Supervise pets and don't let them run free
Occasionally seen during the day
Frequently seen at night
Free-ranging pets occasionally disappear
Use hazing, negative stimuli (shouting, chasing, throwing objects)
Frequently seen during the day
Stalking or attacking pets
Fleeing from people
Consider removal program in conjunction with education; prohibit/limit feeding of wildlife; supervise pets; use negative stimuli
Approaching people aggressively
Growling, barking when hazed (rather than running)
Following children
Preying on pets in yards
Initiate removal program in conjunction with education; prohibit/limit feeding of wildlife; supervise pets; use negative stimuli
Courtesy of The Urban Coyote Project

Easy Steps to Avoid Conflicts

- 1.) Don't feed wildlife
- 2.) Don't let your pet run free
- 3.) Avoid areas of previous sighting
- 4.) Use repellants and fencing
- 5.) Do not create conflict where there isn't any
- 6.) Report aggressive behavior, but know what that means.

Coyotes and You
Solving "conflicts" with coyotes

- 1.) Don't feed wildlife
  - Remove possible coyote attractants from your property (e.g. food sources due to feeding birds, pet food, ripe fruit, trash, possible den sites).

Make food unavailable

Coyotes and You
Solving "conflicts" with coyotes

- 2.) Don't let pets run free
  - Be vigilant when pets are outside (especially during winter and spring).
  - Do not leave small pets unattended or unprotected outside.
    - Keep small pets indoors or within covered runs, behind fencing, etc.
    - Keep pets on a leash when out for a walk.

Coyotes and You
Solving "conflicts" with coyotes

- 3.) Avoid areas of previous sighting
  - Look for signs of coyotes (tracks, scat).
    - Be especially alert when coyotes may have pups near their den – especially during May and June).

- If a coyote seems intent on defending a certain area, particularly around pupping season (May), your best bet may be to alter your route to avoid conflict with a normally calm animal; understand that there may be seasonal patterns of behavioral changes and act accordingly

Coyotes and You
Solving "conflicts" with coyotes

- 4.) Use repellants and fencing
  - Humane Harassment- Negative conditioning of coyotes (loud noise; toss stones, marbles, etc. at them; paintball guns). Pepper spray will eliminate the problem most of the time.
- Fencing your property can help keep coyotes out if the fence is properly installed.
  - A fence that is at least four feet tall will keep most coyotes out.
  - Chain link or sturdy welded wire fence may be used.
  - Coyotes can jump several feet and are also very good climbers and diggers.
  - Reinforcing the fence with an electric wire or a roll bar, or installing a taller fence, may be needed to deter an overly ambitious coyote.

Coyotes and You
Solving "conflicts" with coyotes

- 5.) Do not create conflict where there isn't any
  - If a coyote is acting as a coyote should by avoiding humans and pets, do not seek out opportunities to haze or otherwise aggravate the animal.
  - Embracing communal respect is key.

Coyotes and You
Solving "conflicts" with coyotes

- 6.) Report aggressive behavior, but know what that means.
  - Target coyotes showing "bad behaviors" (e.g., approaching people at close distances (< 10 to 15 feet); coming into yards to observe/stalk pets); regularly approaching schools/day care facilities while toddlers are present). Aggressive barking, hackles up.
- **Removing coyotes is always temporary, and when done properly will require time, effort and funding.**

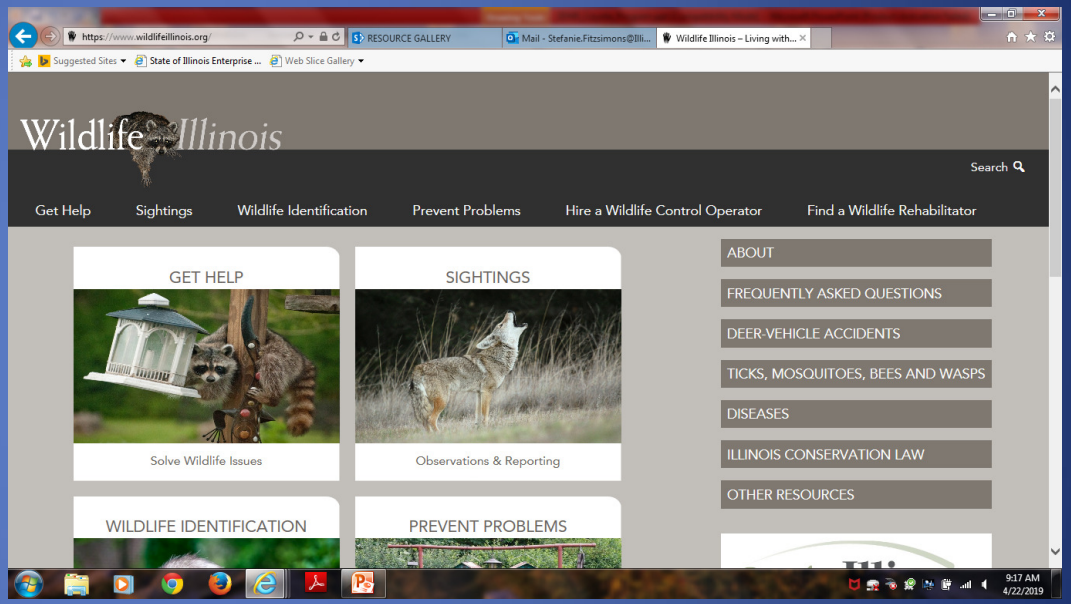
Coyotes and You
Solving "conflicts" with coyotes

- Residential areas: Removal by licensed trapper (fee), capture via padded foot-hold traps and relocated (10 to 40 miles away) or euthanized.
  - Relocation seldom works so animal is usually euthanized
- Outside municipal jurisdictions – year round hunting season or trapping (fall and winter months).

Wildlife Illinois

IDNR and University of Illinois Extension

https://www.wildlifeillinois.org/



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Thank you!
Questions???

Fun Facts:

-Coyotes are good swimmers.

-Coyotes can run up to 43 miles per hour for short distances.

-Illinois pioneers called coyotes "prairie wolves" or "brush wolves".

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