



## *Living Near Coyotes in Highlands Ranch*

### **Awareness Can Reduce Coyote Encounters**

The Metro District manages 2,100 acres of natural open space areas in Highlands Ranch. Much of the land is natural areas and long vegetated drainage ways providing valuable habitat and travel corridors for a variety of wildlife. As summer approaches so does the likelihood of people and pets viewing and encountering wildlife. Residents notice coyotes more frequently during this time of the year. While residents are outside enjoying the warm weather, coyotes are foraging more frequently in the natural areas to feed their young.

The coyote (*Canis latrans*) is a member of the dog family that resembles a small German shepherd with the exception of the long snout and bushy, black-tipped tail. Coyotes feed on rabbits, mice, birds and other small animals, helping to maintain an ecological balance among wildlife populations.

Coyotes have their litters during April and May, and can deliver an average of five or six pups in a litter. During this time of year they become more territorial, with coyote conflicts often centering on feeding issues. In an urban setting such as Highlands Ranch, coyotes have habituated to people, meaning they have changed their behavior in response to previous human interaction. People tend to leave food along the trail and in yards. It doesn't take long to teach a wild animal to associate people with food.

Metro District Park Rangers are often asked why the coyotes aren't relocated. According to state wildlife policy, coyotes cannot be relocated. Removing habituated coyotes does not solve the problem. If one is removed, another will take its place. It is an ecological niche that will always need to be filled. Solving the problem begins with altering our behavior.

### **Tips for Discouraging Coyotes near Homes:**

- Frighten coyotes with loud noises or use unnatural odors, such as ammonia, to clean trash cans.
- Remove pet food, table scraps on compost piles, fallen fruit and spilled seed beneath birdfeeders.
- Remove vegetation and brush that provides cover for coyotes and prey.
- Use yard lights with motion protectors to frighten coyotes away.

### Protecting Pets:

- Keep pets in fenced areas or kennels with a covered top. Remember split rail fences and invisible fences are not coyote safe.
- Provide human supervision while outdoors, unless pets are in a secure, roofed kennel.
- Do not allow pets to run loose. Pets must be kept on leash when in the parks and open space areas.

For more information about coyotes and other urban wildlife, please visit <http://wildlife.state.co.us/Education/LivingWithWildlife>.

### Coyote Encounters

Coyotes are usually wary of humans and will avoid people whenever possible. Aggressive behavior toward people is not normal, and is most often a result of habituation due to feeding by humans. If you encounter a coyote remember the following:

- Never feed or attempt to tame a coyote.
- Do not turn your back or run from a coyote.
- If approached or followed by a coyote, make loud noises and make yourself look big. If this fails, throw rocks or other objects.
- Always keep yourself between the coyote and small children.

### Learn More

For more information about the Metro District of Highlands Ranch, please call 303-791-0430, or visit [www.highlandsranch.org](http://www.highlandsranch.org).

You may also learn more about the Metro District by reading the *Messenger* magazine, published four times annually and mailed to all homes in Highlands Ranch.

The *e-Messenger* electronic newsletter, features timely updates about community news and events. To sign up for the *e-Messenger*, please send a message to [info@highlandsranch.org](mailto:info@highlandsranch.org) with Sign Me Up! in the subject line.