



A coyote mid-mousing

Image courtesy of Henry H. Holdsworth



Female coyote with her pups

Image Courtesy of Steve Guymon of the USDA  
National Wildlife Research Center

Front cover:

Howling coyote  
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# **FORT SELDEN**

## **HISTORIC SITE**

### **COYOTE**



At about 250,000 square miles, the Chihuahuan Desert covers a large portion of North America from Northern Mexico through the Southwestern United States. It is home to around 1,000 different species of animals. Each of these animals have specific characteristics that help them survive in the desert environment.

In this brochure, learn about the coyote, one species found in the Chihuahuan Desert.

Keep your ears peeled while out at Fort Selden Historic Site. You might just hear a coyote or two, way out in the desert.

## Physical Characteristics

The coyote has a long, bushy, black-tipped tail with pointed ears and a narrow-pointed face. Their fur can range from brown to grey and their bellies are white. They are often mistaken for a dog because of how closely they resemble domesticated dogs.

## Diet

This animal is an omnivore and is known to eat almost anything from cactus fruit, mesquite beans, flowers, insects, rodents, lizards, rabbits, birds, snakes, deer, roadkill, and even garbage.

## Habitat

The coyote can be found in a range of habitats from scrubs, grasslands, foothills, and even large cities. This animal's ability to efficiently adapt to the food it eats and the environment where it lives is one of the main reasons why the coyote population has been able to thrive for so many years. When raising her pups, a mother coyote will keep the same den and only move her babies if the area becomes unsafe.

## Senses

Coyotes have very good hearing. They use it to detect prey and avoid danger. The movement and position of their ears communicate their mood and standing within the group.

## Predators

The main threat the coyote faces is disease, but also includes bears, mountain lions, and wolves. Humans can also be a threat as coyotes get more comfortable living closer to cities. Many coyotes get hit by cars when trying to cross roads.

## Interesting Facts

- Coyotes have a unique hunting method called "mousing." Once they've cornered their prey (usually prey burrowed in a hole), the coyote will pounce with its front paws and dive its head into the hole.

- When coyotes stray too far from their den, they will 'sing' as a way to communicate and to keep track of the members of their family.

- When a coyote feels threatened their tail will become bushy and is held horizontally as a display of aggression.

- Coyotes are very vocal animals. They make different noises to communicate different needs. Howling is used to communicate presence in an area to other nearby coyotes. Yelping is often heard when coyote pups are playing with one another. Yelps can also be heard when communicating frustration within the group. Coyotes bark to show their dominance and use it when they

feel threatened. Huffing is how parents call their pups.

- Coyotes are digitigrade. They walk with only their toes touching the ground.

- Coyotes can run up to 40 miles per hour and jump up to 8 feet in the air.

- A coyote gestation period lasts 60 to 63 days. Coyote pairs mate between February and April. Two months later, the female will give birth to 3-12 pups in the den. Within about three weeks, the pups will come out of the den. After they are weaned at the age of 4 weeks, the parents will feed them regurgitated food. The male pups will leave their family in the fall (5-6 months after birth), but the female pups will stay in their mother's pack.

- Coyotes are very good swimmers.

- Coyotes are monogamous, which means they have one mate their whole life.

- Coyotes rarely build their own dens. They usually take over an abandoned one.

- Coyote pups are born blind. They open their eyes after 10 days.