

Bob Kutz, Wild Life Biologist

By John Hunter

This is an interesting article on coyotes I recently came across. Bob Kutz a Biologist who's written and published several books on general wild life and wild life habitat also provided information for this article.

To most Native American cultures, the clever, crafty and mischievous Coyote was known as the "Little Wolf." He played a primary role in their myths, legends and cosmologies, especially among those cultures of the Desert Southwest.

Some studies indicate that in the desert, valleys and low foothills, Coyotes occupy a range of no more than 10 or 12 square miles. In mountainous areas they probably have both a summer and winter range, as heavy snows drive them to lower elevations.

The Coyote does not hibernate. It travels over its range and hunts both day and night, running swiftly and catching its prey easily. It has a varied diet and seems able to exist on whatever the area offers in the way of food. The Coyote eats meat and fish, either fresh or spoiled, and at times it eats fruits and vegetable matter and has even been known to raid melon patches.

Although the Coyote has been observed killing sheep, poultry and other livestock, it does not subsist on domestic animals. Food habit studies reveal that its principle diet is composed of deer, rabbits, ground squirrels, other small rodents, insects, even reptiles, and fruits and berries of wild plants.

Coyotes have a good sense of smell, vision and hearing which, coupled with evasiveness, enables them to survive both in the wild and occasionally in the suburban areas of large cities. They are common in most rural areas, but because of their secretive nature, few are seen. Efforts to control or exterminate the Coyote by predator control agents seem to have produced an animal that is extremely alert and wary and well able to maintain itself

Coyotes have long been one of the most controversial of all non-game animals. Agricultural interests have urged its control by whatever means necessary so that actual and potential livestock losses may be eliminated. Since 1891, when the first programs aimed at control were begun in California, nearly 500,000 Coyotes have been reported destroyed at a cost of an estimated \$ 30 million of the taxpayers' money.

Environmentalists firmly believe that the Coyotes are necessary to preserve the balance of nature. Some sportsmen feel the Coyote is responsible for the declines in game species. Biologists agree that individual animals preying on livestock and poultry should be destroyed but that the species as a whole is not necessarily harmful, because much of its diet is made up of destructive rodents. Biologists also agree that Coyote populations have no lasting effects on other wildlife populations.

Coyotes have been classified as non-game animals in California and many other states too. They may be taken throughout the year under the authority of a hunting license. Meanwhile, despite the constant hunting and intensive efforts to reduce the Coyote population, on a quiet night the song of the "Little Wolf" may still be heard throughout the Desert Southwest and the worm evenings back east.

I guess those darn coyotes are still out there, so let's go hunting.