

Coyotes thriving in U.S. cities

January 4 2006

Coyotes are thriving in some of the largest U.S. cities, despite scientists' belief that these mammals intently avoid urban human populations.

Stanley Gehrt, an assistant professor of environmental and natural resources at Ohio State University, has been studying coyote behavior in Chicago for six years.

Gehrt and his colleagues have found that urban coyote populations are much larger than expected; that they live longer than their rural cousins in these environments; and that they are more active at nighttime than coyotes living in rural areas.

Coyotes also do some good, helping control rapidly growing populations of Canada geese throughout North America.

"We couldn't find an area in Chicago where there weren't coyotes," Gehrt said. "They've learned to exploit all parts of their landscape."

Since the beginning of the study, the researchers have caught and tagged more than 200 coyotes. They estimate that there may be somewhere between several hundred and 2,000 coyotes in Chicago.

Some of the animals live in city parks, while others live among apartment and commercial buildings and in industrial parks.

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Citation: Coyotes thriving in U.S. cities (2006, January 4) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-01-coyotes-cities.html>

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