

Urban coyotes eat lots of cats—and human garbage, study of their poop reveals

18 March 2020, by Mark Price



A coyote in Yosemite National Park, California, USA.
Credit: Christopher Bruno/Wikipeida

A study that "dissected" 3,100 pieces of coyote poop discovered domestic cats are a big part of what urban coyotes eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner, according to the National Park Service.

Human garbage was their chief source of food, however, the study found.

The multi-year study focused on coyotes roaming Southern California, a region that has a mix of highly populated cities and wilderness areas.

Among the discoveries: Coyotes in the suburbs are less fond of eating cats, but they still eat them when the opportunity allows.

"Cat remains were found in 20 percent of urban [coyote](#) scat, as compared to four of suburban coyote scat," the National Park Service reported.

"Human [food resources](#) including garbage, ornamental fruits, and [domestic cats](#) accounted for between 60 to 75 percent of urban coyote diets."

The [park](#) service and California State University

Northridge partnered in the study, which focused both on finding out what coyotes eat and learning the differences between urban coyotes and their country cousins.

The incriminating evidence was collected by 150 volunteers, who dissected the poop at "scat parties," a press release said.

In addition to scat, researchers studied [isotope ratios](#) in coyote whiskers, which were typically collected from coyotes hit and killed in traffic, the release said.

The study was led by California State University biology professor Tim Karels and former biology graduate student Rachel N. Larson, and they believe most of the consumed cats were feral, according to a university press release.

"They (coyotes) are omnivores, which means they will eat practically anything that fits in their mouths," Karels said in the release. "Because they will eat anything, coyotes can live practically anywhere."

The study proves that neighborhoods can reduce coyote populations by simply securing garbage better—and not letting our pet cats roam the streets at night, the report said.

"Whether it's cats, fruits or garbage, the food resources that we have left out for them is why coyotes hang around," ecologist Justin Brown said in the park [service](#) release.

"We do have some control over coyotes being here and it's all tied to us. If we don't provide the food sources in our neighborhoods, they would not be living in them."

©2020 The Charlotte Observer (Charlotte, N.C.)
Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

APA citation: Urban coyotes eat lots of cats—and human garbage, study of their poop reveals (2020, March 18) retrieved 8 December 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-03-urban-coyotes-lots-catsand-human.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.