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# DEC Issues Guidance to Avoid Conflicts with Coyotes

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today issued guidance on preventing conflicts between people and coyotes as spring temperatures approach and coyotes increase foraging.

"Coyotes are an integral part of our natural ecosystem, but they can come into conflict with people if they become habituated to human presence and food sources," said DEC Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos. "The coyote is an adaptable animal and has established populations throughout most of New York State. While coyotes can provide many benefits to New Yorkers through observation, photography, hunting, and trapping, they should be treated with respect and common sense."

With the onset of warmer weather, many of New York's resident coyotes have set up dens for soon-to-arrive pups. Coyotes are well adapted to suburban and even urban environments, but for the most part they will avoid contact with people. However, conflicts with people and pets may result as coyotes tend to be territorial around den sites during the spring through mid-summer period as they forage almost constantly to provide food for their young.

To minimize the chance that conflicts between people and coyotes occur, it is important that coyotes' natural fear of people is maintained. Below are recommended steps residents and visitors can take to reduce or prevent conflicts from occurring:

* Do not feed coyotes and discourage others from doing so.
* Unintentional food sources attract coyotes and other wildlife and increase risks to people and pets. To reduce risks:
  + Do not feed pets outside.
  + Make any garbage inaccessible to coyotes and other animals.
  + Fence or enclose compost piles so they are not accessible to coyotes.
  + Eliminate availability of bird seed. Concentrations of birds and rodents that come to feeders can attract coyotes. If you see a coyote(s) near your birdfeeder, clean up waste seed and spillage to remove the attractant.
* Do not allow coyotes to approach people or pets.
* Teach children to appreciate coyotes from a distance.
* If you see a coyote, be aggressive in your behavior - stand tall, and hold arms out to look large. If a coyote lingers for too long, then make loud noises, wave your arms, throw sticks and stones.
* Do not allow pets to run free. Supervise all outdoor pets to keep them safe from coyotes and other wildlife, especially at sunset and at night. Small dogs and cats are especially vulnerable to coyotes.
* Fencing your yard may deter coyotes. The fence should be tight to the ground, preferably extending six inches below ground level, and taller than four feet.
* Remove brush and tall grass from around your home to reduce protective cover for coyotes. Coyotes are typically secretive and like areas where they can hide.
* Contact your local police department and NYSDEC regional office for assistance if you notice that coyotes are exhibiting "bold" behaviors and have little or no fear of people. Seeing a coyote occasionally throughout the year is not evidence of bold behavior.
* Ask your neighbors to follow these same steps.

The Eastern coyote is found in rural farmlands and forests to populated suburban and urban areas. In most cases, coyotes avoid people as much as possible. In fact, coyotes provide many exciting opportunities for New Yorkers. Their howling and yipping at night can provide a haunting but harmless reminder of wildlife in our midst. However, if coyotes learn to associate people with food (such as, garbage or pet food), they may lose their natural fear of humans, and the potential for close encounters or conflicts increases.

It is important to keep pets safe. Cats allowed to roam free are at risk from many different factors. To protect your cat from coyotes and other hazards, and to help protect nesting birds that cats often prey on, keep your cat indoors, or allow it outside only under supervision.

Owners of small dogs also have cause for concern. Small dogs are at greatest risk of being harmed or killed when coyotes are being territorial during denning and pup-rearing. Small dogs should not be left unattended in backyards at night and should remain supervised. Coyotes may approach small dogs along streets at night near natural areas, even in the presence of dog owners. Be alert of your surroundings and take precautions such as carrying a flashlight or a walking stick to deter coyotes. Owners of large and medium sized dogs have less to worry about, but should still take precautions.

If coyotes are seen repeatedly during the daytime in a human-populated area or in close proximity to residences, follow the above recommendations to reduce or prevent potential problems. If coyote behavior remains unchanged or becomes threatening, please report this to the local DEC office, as this may indicate that some individual coyotes have lost their fear of people and there may be a greater risk that a problem could occur.

For additional information about the [Eastern Coyote](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/9359.html) and preventing conflicts with coyotes, visit the following webpages on DEC's website:

* [Eastern Coyote](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/9359.html)
* [Coyote Conflicts](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6971.html)
* [Feeding Wildlife: a wrong choice](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/74763.html)
* [Tips to Eliminate Wildlife Conflicts](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/89522.html)