

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Meet the Coyote Next Door

By Andy Boyles  
2017

*Scientists are finding that more and more coyotes are living in cities. In this informational text, Andy Boyles explores how coyotes are learning to survive in cities and how they interact with humans. As you read, take notes on what Dr. Gehrt learns from studying coyotes.*

- [1] Dog owners who lived near Chicago's Soldier Field knew to watch out for the coyote. The wild, doglike animal lived somewhere among the tall buildings near the football stadium. As the sun went down each evening, the coyote would lie in the grass next to a parking garage, waiting. Within his view, people walked their dogs along a bike trail. Each night, the coyote would charge at the first dog to come along.

Dr. Stanley Gehrt, a scientist at Ohio State University, led the team that solved the problem. "He never hurt any dogs, and he never hurt any people. He just scared people."



*"Coyote pups are popping up everywhere!" by Cook County Coyote Project is used with permission.*

Dr. Gehrt says conflicts between coyotes and city dwellers<sup>1</sup> are becoming more common now that coyotes have moved into many North American cities and suburbs.

In addition to studying coyotes, he and his co-workers teach people ways to avoid problems with coyotes. In short, he says, "Don't feed them, and manage your pets."

- [5] Over the past 15 years, Dr. Gehrt and his fellow researchers have discovered how coyotes adapt<sup>2</sup> to the dangers of city life. In Chicago and the surrounding area, the team has caught more than 900 coyotes, checking their health, implanting microchips in pups, and fitting adults with collars that can be tracked electronically.

The secret to the coyote's success is intelligence. To survive in the wild, a coyote must hunt small animals, avoid becoming a meal for wolves or bears, and yet trail one of its own predators, the wolf, to scavenge<sup>3</sup> its leftovers. "This way of living creates a super-smart animal," Dr. Gehrt says.

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1. people who live in a city  
2. **Adapt (verb):** to become adjusted to new conditions  
3. When coyotes "scavenge," they feed on the left over remains of already dead animals.

## Life in the City

One of the smartest changes coyotes made was to hide during the day and come out mainly at night. From sunup to sundown, they find cover under bushes between buildings, along roads, and at the edges of properties, parking lots, and cemeteries. If they can't find a hiding place, they can curl up in any open space where their natural camouflage<sup>4</sup> blends in. Coyotes have also learned to avoid their biggest killer: cars. To defend their territories, they have to travel over large areas each night, and they soon become experts at crossing streets and roads. One female has been seen sitting patiently at a busy intersection. She may not know how traffic lights work, but she has learned that the cars will soon stop long enough for her to cross the street. Still, cars remain the number-one cause of death for city coyotes.

The most important spot in a coyote's territory is the den, where the parents keep their newborn pups. Instead of using a badger's burrow or a hollow log, city coyotes may choose spaces in broken foundations or dry drainage pipes. One pair dug a den in a strip of ground between a daycare center and a swimming pool. They raised their pups next to these busy spots three years in a row.

## Smart Humans

Now that coyotes have learned how to live among us, we can learn what to do if we have coyotes as neighbors. The male that charged at passing dogs near Soldier Field is an example. Dr. Gehrt and his co-workers had already been watching the coyote for months, and the animal had always avoided dogs. But now he and his mate had a den with pups on top of the parking garage nearby. He was charging at the dogs to defend his family. The researchers solved the problem. "The idea is to try to scare the animal away and reinforce<sup>5</sup> the idea that coyotes should be afraid of people," he says. When the coyote appeared in the evening, they ran toward it, yelling and shaking a noisemaker — a coffee can with coins rattling inside. "Usually, that's all you have to do," Dr. Gehrt says. "You do it once, and you'll never see that coyote again." This coyote did come back, and the team chased him away a few nights in a row. Finally, the coyote pair moved out of the parking garage and made a new den. They chose a vacant<sup>6</sup> lot about a quarter of a mile away. There, they raised their litter — five healthy coyotes who might never know life outside the city.

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4. an animal's coloring that allows it to blend in with its surroundings  
5. **Reinforce (verb):** to strengthen or support something  
6. **Vacant (adjective):** empty

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best expresses the central idea of the text?
  - A. Humans have forced coyotes out of forests and into cities.
  - B. Coyotes will not survive in the city if cars continue to carelessly hit them.
  - C. Humans and coyotes cannot successfully live in the same space.
  - D. Coyotes have changed their habits to successfully live among humans.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "He never hurt any dogs, and he never hurt any people. He just scared people." (Paragraph 2)
  - B. "Over the past 15 years, Dr. Gehrt and his fellow researchers have discovered how coyotes adapt to the dangers of city life." (Paragraph 5)
  - C. "Still, cars remain the number-one cause of death for city coyotes." (Paragraph 7)
  - D. "The idea is to try to scare the animal away and reinforce the idea that coyotes should be afraid of people" (Paragraph 9)
  
3. Which statement best describes how coyotes are introduced in the text?
  - A. Coyotes are described as a benefit to humans and animals in the city.
  - B. A story shows coyotes threatening people and animals in the city.
  - C. Facts about coyotes emphasize how smart city coyotes are.
  - D. Coyotes are illustrated as causing minimal disturbances in the city.
  
4. What is the author's main purpose in the text?
  - A. to explain how people and coyotes can avoid problems with one another
  - B. to emphasize how much more intelligent coyotes are than other animals
  - C. to advise people on how they can get coyotes out of their cities
  - D. to describe the benefits of coyotes living in cities
  
5. How have humans benefited from scientists' study of coyotes? Use evidence from the text in your response.

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.**

1. In the text, the author discusses the interaction between coyotes and humans in cities. Who appears to be in control of this interaction? Have you ever seen a wild animal in an unexpected place? If so, describe your experience.
2. The text describes a misunderstood coyote that scares people and their pets because he is trying to defend his family. What do you think should be done about coyotes living in cities?
3. Dr. Gehrt and his team study coyotes to help humans interact with them better in the city. Have you ever been scared by an animal? What did you do?