

# The News Journal

## Though rare, coyotes right at home in Del.

Hunters and trappers who spend long hours in Delaware's fields, woods and marshes are accustomed to encountering furbearing animals like foxes, raccoons, skunks, beavers, muskrats, possums and even minks.

But, sometimes, Delaware hunters and trappers cross paths with an animal most often associated with the Great Plains; a coyote.



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Although many Delaware residents find it hard to believe, it is true that coyotes inhabit all three Delaware counties, and their numbers may be on the rise. According to Joe Rogerson, game mammal biologist for the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, Delaware has seen a gradual increase in reported

coyote sightings over the past 10 years.

"They are uncommon," Rogerson said, "but we know they can be found in Delaware in low numbers. Coyotes favor fields and low brushy areas rather than

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<http://www.fw.delaware.gov/Hunting/Pages/Coyotes.aspx>

wooded areas, but sightings also have been reported in other areas."

Several Delaware coyotes have been harvested by hunters and trappers recently, while others fell victim to automobiles.

John Massey of Middletown harvested a coyote with a bow in November, and a trapper caught two coyotes near St. Georges in 2008. Another coyote was killed by a vehicle near Middletown in 2008. Rogerson personally examined that animal.

With coyotes in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland, it easy to understand how they have migrated to Delaware. Rogerson believes that the highly adaptable Delaware coyotes slowly migrated south from neighboring Mid-Atlantic states and New England due to habitat loss.

Coyotes are opportunistic feeders and will eat just about anything, including small mammals, rodents, reptiles, amphib-

ians and birds. They also eat insects, fruits, vegetables, livestock, pets, pet food and garbage. Because of their scavenging and predatory nature, Rogerson says people should exercise caution if they encounter a coyote.

"If you see a possible coyote in your yard or near your home, observe the same precautions as with any wild animal – keep children and pets indoors, do not approach [the animal], and do not feed it," Rogerson said.

As hunters and trappers encounter coyotes more frequently, Delaware officials are considering listing coyotes as a game species because, according to Rogerson, the current laws "are a little vague."

"Basically, we are not advocating to people that they can kill coyotes at this time," he said. "However, if someone did they would not be prosecuted."

Creating a coyote hunting season would require legislation, Rogerson said.

Steven Kendus' *Hunter's Journal* appears monthly in *The News Journal*. Kendus is the author of *Hunting The First State: A Guide to Delaware Hunting*. Follow his blog and podcast at [www.HuntingTheFirstState.com](http://www.HuntingTheFirstState.com). Contact him at [skendus@HuntingTheFirstState.com](mailto:skendus@HuntingTheFirstState.com).