



OWLS and COYOTES

The Eastern Coyote

The Eastern coyote, common to the Greater Toronto Area, is a hybrid between the Western coyote and Eastern wolf. Adults typically weigh between 10–22 kg, but thick fur makes them appear bigger. They have grey and reddish-brown fur, lighter underparts, a pointed nose with a red-brown top, a grey patch between the eyes, and a bushy, black-tipped tail. Coyote ears are more triangular than a wolf's. Coyotes are not pack animals, but a mother will stay with her young until they are about one year old. Coyotes communicate with a range of sounds including yaps, whines, barks, and howls.



Habitat

Eastern coyotes are very adaptable and can survive in both rural and urban habitats. They often build their dens in old woodchuck holes, which they expand to about 30 cm in diameter and about 3 m in depth. Although less common, coyotes also build dens in hollow trees.

Diet

What is on the menu for coyotes? *Check off each food type.*

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Squirrels | <input type="checkbox"/> Frogs | <input type="checkbox"/> Grasshoppers | <input type="checkbox"/> Dog kibble |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Berries | <input type="checkbox"/> Rats | <input type="checkbox"/> Humans | <input type="checkbox"/> Food compost |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garden vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Snakes | <input type="checkbox"/> Small birds | <input type="checkbox"/> Deer |

If you selected everything, except for humans, you are correct! Coyotes are opportunistic feeders that consume a variety of foods including fallen fruit, seeds, crops, and where they can find it pet food and compost. However, their diet is comprised mainly of insects, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals. Their natural rodent control is beneficial to city dwellers and farmers alike. Preying on small mammals does mean though that our pets are on the menu, so it is important to keep them on leash close to you.

SIGNS OF COYOTES: dens, tracks, scat, howling

Owls

There are 11 species of owls found in Southern Ontario, all with their own unique looks and sounds. Owls have many features that make them excellent hunters. To start, owls have strong eyesight. They have amazing low-light vision that is 50–100x better than humans' and binocular vision that allows them to use depth perception on landscapes far away. Their dish-like facial disks and ears at different heights allow them to hear small things at a distance and in different directions. Their feathers are puffy compared to their body size, and they have special comb-like feathers on their wings that allow them to fly without making a sound.

Owls of Southern Ontario

Barn Owl
Barred Owl
Boreal Owl
Eastern Screech Owl
Great Grey Owl
Great Horned Owl
Long-eared Owl
Northern Hawk Owl
Northern Saw-whet Owl
Short-eared Owl
Snowy Owl

Habitat

Owls are found all over North America. Many prefer forests and require hollow trees or dense vegetation for protection during the day. Since most of their diet consists of small mammals, owls often hunt in fields and open areas to find them.

Diet

Owls feed on a variety of creatures such as insects, small birds, mammals, reptiles, and sometimes fish. They swallow their prey whole but spew up items like bones, claws, feathers, and fur in the form of little pellets. Yum! Search the ground for pellets to locate possible nesting and roosting sites.

SIGNS OF OWLS: pellets, owl calls

Who can label the owl's features?

Label the picture using the following words:

Beak, Facial Disk, Feathers, Feather tufts, Ears

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



ANSWERS: 1. Feather tufts 2. Ears 3. Facial disk 4. Beak 5. Feathers

Activities that are a Hoot

Owl Eyes

Get into pairs. One partner, the owl, will close their eyes, and one will hold up a string or pipe cleaner. Have the owl open only one eye, covering the other, and try to pinch the string. It's pretty tricky, eh? Try it with two eyes open—when we use two eyes, we are able to see things in 3D. Owls can see in 3D too!

Squeak

Choose someone to be the rodent. All other players are the owls who must keep their eyes closed. Use a squeaky toy to test the owls' sense of hearing. Choose different locations in the room, at different heights and squeak the toy, high and low to see if the owls can point to the exact location of the noise. Don't have a squeak toy? No problem. The rodent can clap or snap instead.

Owl and Mouse

One player will be the "owl" and will be blindfolded. Other players will be mice, moving around without a blindfold. The owl is trying to tag the mice as they move about only using their sense of hearing. The mice will have to be as quiet as... well... a mouse! Mice need to move and make gentle "peeps" while trying to avoid the owl. When the mice are tagged, change roles, allowing others to be the owl.

Howl Like a Coyote

Its time to howl like a coyote! Give your best high-pitched howl, yip, yelp, and bark.

**"YIP YIP YIP YELP WOOF YIP
YIP AA-WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
OOOOOOOOOOOOOOO"**

Hoot Like an Owl

While some owl calls can be tricky to learn, we can use human words and sounds to make them easy and fun! Try making these calls.

Long-eared owl: **"Whooo, whooo"**

Great horned owl: **"Who's awake? Me too!"**

Barred owl: **"Who cooks for you? Who cooks for allllll?"**

Northern saw-whet owl: **"Boot...Boot...Boot...Boot"**



Long-eared owl



Great-horned owl



Barred owl



Northern saw-whet owl