



# California Wildlife Center

## Patient of the Week

### July 8, 2022



Photo by Masha Paramonova

## Leader of the Pack

CWC is the only rehabilitation center in all of Los Angeles County licensed to rehabilitate coyotes. They are a sensitive species that requires specialized enclosures and staff that is professionally trained to rehabilitate them. Coyotes are also a rabies vector species, which means they are able to carry the virus without showing clinical symptoms. All of our staff and volunteers who are allowed to come into contact with coyotes, their enclosures, and their dishes/laundry must obtain the costly rabies pre-exposure vaccine and have their titers checked every three years.



Photo by Cambria Wells

Each year we receive about eight orphaned coyote pups that we care for until they are able to survive on their own. With limited options for rehabilitation, it is no wonder we admit these patients from as far away as 175 miles. Occasionally we will have coyotes that are blood siblings, but most of the time each pup will come in after being found orphaned and alone. Once at CWC the coyotes will go through a 7-day quarantine to make sure they do not have any communicable diseases that could spread to other pups. After quarantine the coyotes are combined to form their own pack and will eventually be released together into the wild.

This season we have admitted multiple coyote pups with severe mange. Although the definitive cause is unknown, we usually see these types of cases when animals have been exposed to rodenticide. This happens when rodents ingest poison, become weak, and are easily caught and eaten by coyotes (and other predators). We treat mange with a variety of antiparasitics and prescribe antibiotics for secondary infections. The coyotes stay quarantined until they have completely healed from their wounds and all of the mites have been killed. Since coyotes are social animals, we provide single patients with extra enrichment to keep them mentally stimulated. For example, we hide odiferous foods in newspaper and cardboard boxes, hide protein in the middle of melons and other large fruits, and make scent trails using native plants found around our property.

In the wild each coyote pack has an alpha pair that will mate for life. The female will usually have four to six offspring, but she can increase or decrease her litter size based on the availability of food and population density. Females have been recorded to have more than fifteen pups when coyote populations have declined and there is an ample food source. The additional nutrition increases egg production, so more pups are born per litter. Other members of the pack will not normally mate and instead will help the alpha pair raise their young.



# **California Wildlife Center**

## **Patient of the Week**

### **July 8, 2022**

Coyotes give birth in a natal den. These dens can be secure rock formations, hollowed out trees, or dug into hillsides. It is common for mothers to have multiple dens and move their pups between sites. Coyote pups will stay very close to the den until they are about two months old. At that time, they will start to make short trips close to the den. Both parents will often leave their pups alone for an extended period of time. It is not uncommon to see young coyotes without a parent, but it is unusual to see a single coyote pup.

Young coyote siblings will remain in a group and practice the skills they need to survive in the wild. It is normal to see them play fighting and stalking each other without the supervision of a parent. Here at CWC we are fortunate to have a remote camera system where we can observe the pack interacting. This year we have frequently seen the oldest male coyote pup teach the smallest female how to pin down prey. The large coyote will let the smaller one “win” by rolling onto his back while the female play-bites around his neck.

If you see a single small coyote pup (especially if they appear lethargic or injured in any way) they may need help. In these situations, we recommend that members of the public contact their local wildlife rehabilitation center or animal service agency for advice. We strongly advise against the public attempting to contain these animals on their own. Since coyotes are a rabies vector species, a bite or mishandling would result in the animal needing to be immediately euthanized to test for the virus. In order to keep everyone safe it is best to let professionals assess and intervene if action is needed.

If you encounter a healthy coyote and wish to repel them, appear large and make noise by shouting and clapping your hands. Slowly back away, but do not turn your back and run. To dissuade coyotes from frequenting your property, keep cats indoors, remove all pet food that is left outside, and tightly cover trash cans. Large rodent populations also attract coyotes, and so cleaning up brush piles and other rodent habitat will reduce the food source for coyotes.