

Wolf or Coyote?

Know the Differences



Mexican Wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*)

- Nose is broad and blocky
- Ears are more rounded and relatively short
- Fur color is very similar to coyotes: grizzled gray, black, rust or buff; not all white or all black
- Legs are longer, giving wolves a more lanky appearance; feet are larger
- Weighs 50–80 pounds
- Sometimes displays curious behavior and may not flee as quickly
- Not all wolves have radio collars
- Front paw is 4 1/2 inches long by 3 1/2 inches wide

Description: Smaller than a northern gray wolf but larger than a coyote. Adults are 70–80 pounds and 30 inches at the shoulder. Adults are 5–5.5 feet long, including a 14- to 17-inch tail. Males are larger than females. Head and feet are large in proportion to body. Small, erect ears with wide tufts of hair that grow out and down are one of the Mexican wolf's most distinctive features. Body color is often mottled or patchy, varying from gray and black to brown and buff.

Habitat: Mid- to high-elevation woodlands, including oak, pinyon pine, juniper, ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests. Almost all historical records of Mexican wolves in Arizona occurred above 4,500 feet in elevation. Habitat must contain large ungulate prey animals for wolves to thrive.

Coyote (*Canis latrans*)

- Nose is slender and pointed
- Ears are prominent, pointed and relatively long
- Fur color is very similar to wolves: grizzled gray, rust or buff; rarely white or black
- Legs and feet are smaller, more delicate
- Weighs 20–35 pounds
- Usually displays skittish behavior, tends to flee immediately
- Front paw is 2 1/2 inches long by 2 inches wide

Description: Coyotes are on the small side, weighing less than 35 pounds. An adult measures about 21 inches tall at the shoulder, with a total length of up to 49 inches. The coyote looks much like a shepherd dog, the pelage being rather long, heavy and often presenting a shaggy or grizzled appearance. The fur is reddish or tawny gray, sometimes tipped with black. The tail is large and very bushy. Ears are upright, and the slender muzzle is sharply pointed. Seasonal color variation is considerable among coyotes, and immature pelage is grayer and duller than that of an adult.

Habitat: All habitats are occupied, from low desert to montane forest and woodland, but the coyote tends to avoid thickly forested, high elevation areas.