



An apple a day ... may bring coyotes to your yard

When you pull out of a fast food parking lot, feeling guilty about your 'trash' diet, you aren't alone. This may be a product of adapting to city life. And it's not unique to humans. Coyotes who live in urban environments also eat a lot of trash, literally.

In a recent study conducted by the National Park Service, they found that 75% of an urban coyote's diet is from human sources, which includes fruit trees, garbage and composting, pet foods and urban pets. By contrast, coyotes in more natural areas consume only 36% human food sources, less than half of their urban counterparts.

So what are coyotes eating in your neighborhood? Mostly fruit that has fallen in yards, pet food and trash from bins that aren't securely fastened. These sources make up more than 55% of their diet. Coyotes are generalists, which means that they can diversify their diet to survive on whatever is available. While we may not think about Wyle E. Coyote munching on a fig, in the city, that's exactly what they do. The National Park Service found figs in 85% of coyote scat nine months out of the year. This means that most of the times that they are sneaking into your backyard, it's not in search of an animal but actually fallen fruit and unsecured trash.

What can you do? First of all, pick up all fruit from the ground in your front and back yard and feed your pets indoors. Secure all trash bins and cover all composting piles. Do not leave your pets outside at night without proper supervision.

Concerned about your yard's coyote risk? Scientists at Loyola Marymount University have developed a backyard risk assessment that will provide you with a risk score. If you are interested in participating in this study or would like to learn more about coyote studies happening in your neighborhood, contact Dr. Melinda Weaver at melinda.weaver@lmu.edu.