**Was That a Coyote? How to Tell a Coyote from a Dog**

Jennifer Hopper, June 2015

Both coyotes and dogs belong to the dog family, but while dogs and coyotes are quite different animals, they share some characteristics, like behavior and appearance. A typical coyote resembles a small, lanky German shepherd or border collie, but there are a few easy to spot characteristics that distinguish it from a dog.

Most coyotes weigh between 20 and 35 lbs. Coyotes look sleeker than dogs, they tend to be more slender and have wide set, pointed ears; a long, tapered muzzle; yellow eyes; slender legs; small feet; and a straight, bushy tail which is carried low to the ground. Coyotes are usually a grayish brown with reddish tinges behind the ears and around the face, but coloration can vary from a silver-gray to black.



A coyote’s build gives the impression of having longer legs than a dog, but actually its ‘elbow’ is lower than its line of sternum, while most dogs have an “elbow” joint which is higher than its sternum. The lower elbow joint gives the coyote a leggier appearance.



Next time you think you see a coyote, try to get a good view of the ears, the snout, and the front legs. If you see wide set, pointed ears; a narrow snout; and elbow joints below the chest line, you can confidently say that you have spotted a coyote.