



Jepsy

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PEOPLE FEED COYOTES

Signals from tracking collars trace the movements of two coyotes in early winter on Aquidneck Island in Narragansett Bay, R.I., where wildlife biologist Numi Mitchell does research. Jepsy (above, red) eats mostly natural food—mice, deer, rabbits, groundhogs, and roadkill—and follows a pattern typical for wild coyotes, patrolling the perimeter of his territory. But Phantom (above, orange), eats mainly cat food left out day and night by the caregiver of a feral colony. (Best management practices call for food to be taken in after feeding times.)

Because Phantom doesn't need to roam to find food, his territory is much smaller and his movements take him mostly back and forth to the cat colony, crossing through the surrounding neighborhood several times a day. Since he's gotten used to people, he's active at the same times humans are, rather than asleep like most urban coyotes. The abundant supply of cat food means Phantom's family group is larger—he fathered seven pups in a single litter—so there are more coyotes per square mile. And since Phantom doesn't much patrol the boundaries of his territory, other coyotes have moved in, further increasing the density and the likelihood coyotes will eat residents' pets or otherwise come into conflict with people.