



“I just heard a pack of coyotes kill a small dog.”

Description



Have you seen (or made) this statement in neighborhood groups on social media? It's one of the most common sources of panic in the suburbs. And, in almost all cases, it's actually not true.

Coyotes live in small family groups of 2-8 individuals, usually a mated pair and their young of the year. When the whole family gets together, they tend to celebrate by howling. This helps them bond and it's also meant to intimidate rivals (including us), and it works. When calling together, coyotes will rapidly change the pitch and direction of their calls so it sounds like a very large group.

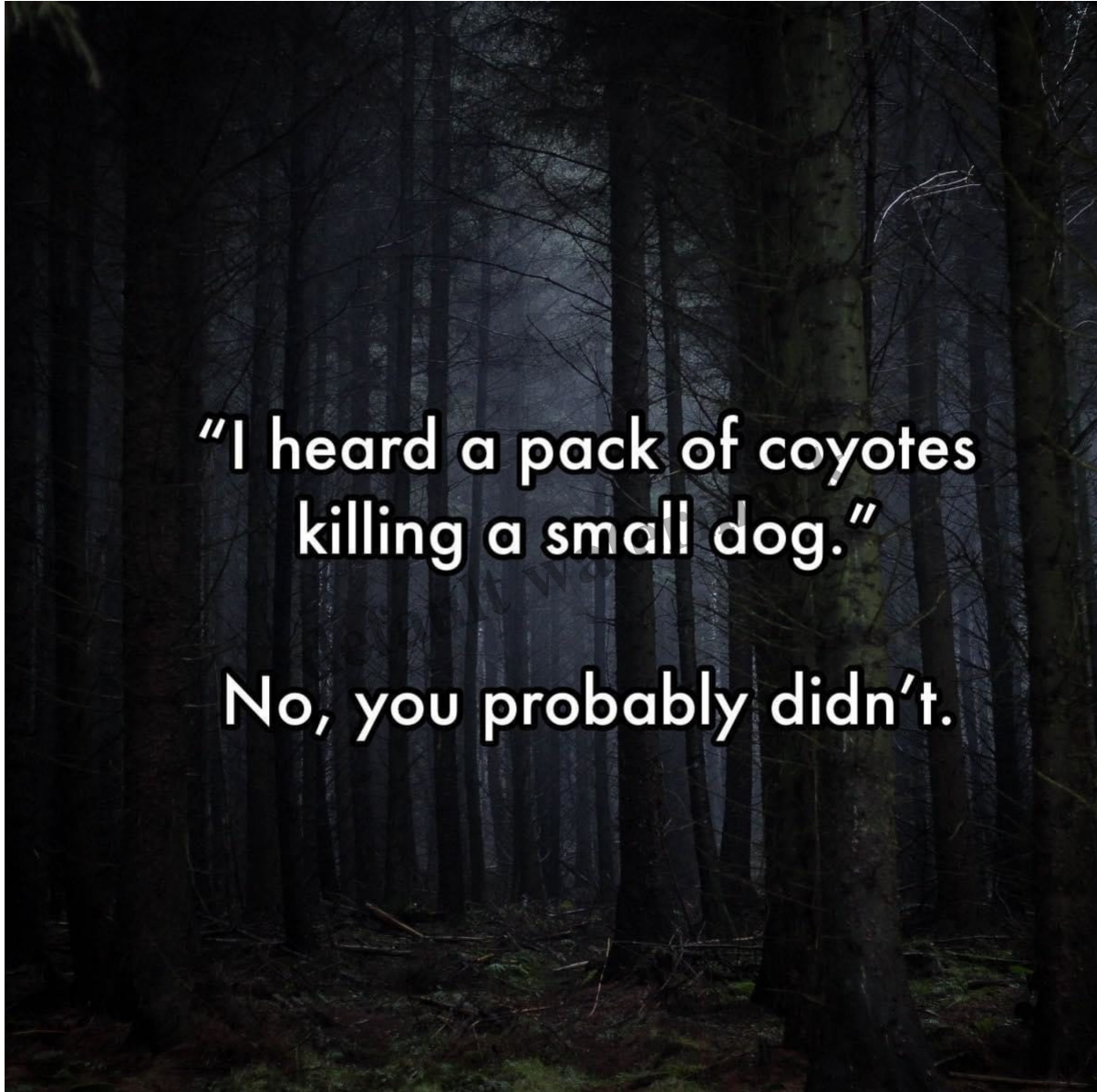
One of the sounds that coyotes make during these social get-togethers is a **high-pitched yelp that increases in pitch and frequency until the “song” ends. To untrained ears, it's very easy to mistake this for the sound of a domestic dog in pain.** Our imaginations sometimes get the best of us, and when we hear the alto of a coyote choir stop abruptly, we may think the “dog” has been killed.

Coyotes don't howl and hip while hunting. There's no reason for them to do so, since vocalizations scare away prey and give them time to flee. Coyotes are completely silent when stalking or cornering their meals, so we rarely (if ever) hear them hunting.

Of course, that's not to say that coyotes never kill domestic dogs at all. If a dog is roaming freely off-leash and becomes a threat to a coyote or its pups, they will defend themselves, just like any animal.

Small dogs are very easy prey and, when left unattended in coyote territory, they are at risk. Because of this, it's very important to keep your pets properly contained at all times.

However, it's important not to panic over the normal social songs that coyote families sing together. The sound that you hear isn't actually a dog in pain, but a family enjoying each other's company.



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