

HUNTING

Cooperatively

COOPERATION IN NATURE

Coyotes and badgers seem like they'd be tough competitors, if not even predator and prey! And indeed, sometimes they do hunt each other – coyotes have been documented preying on badgers, and badgers have been documented preying on young coyotes. But other times, these two animals decide to hunt together instead, and use each other's unique strengths to benefit them both.

Badgers COYOTES

American badgers (*Taxidea taxus*) are members of the mustelid family, a group that includes otters, weasels and wolverines. Badgers have flat and long bodies with thick gray fur, a black and white triangular face and very short legs. They live in the prairies, grasslands and sagebrush steppes of Wyoming, where their stout physique and strong legs help them excel at digging out deep, large dens to raise their young, hide from predators and protect themselves from harsh weather. Badgers are generally solitary outside of their reproductive season. They are fierce hunters and predators of ground squirrels, pocket gophers and other small rodents.

Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) are members of the canine family, a group which also includes foxes, wolves and domestic dogs. They are about two feet tall with thick gray or tan fur. Coyotes can be found in nearly every habitat in Wyoming, including sagebrush steppe, grasslands and prairies. Coyotes generally hunt alone and eat a variety of items including small mammals like rabbits and ground squirrels.

Combining SKILLS

Badgers use their burrow-excavating skills to hunt ground squirrels in underground tunnel systems. Coyotes, on the other hand, are built for chasing and capturing prey above ground. When they team up, coyotes will keep an eye out on the surface while badgers dig out squirrels hiding below ground. This temporary hunting partnership benefits both the coyote and badger; badgers spend less energy searching on the surface and can focus on excavating burrows efficiently, while coyotes take advantage of badgers flushing squirrels from burrows and thus spend less energy pursuing ground squirrels over uneven and brushy terrain.

