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Mini Coyote GPS safety camera alert system

Do you feel the need for speed?

by Paul Lester published on 23 June 2009

Five or 6 years ago radar/speed camera detectors used to ply a good trade, though admittedly their target audience mainly consisted of boy racers and those looking to push a flashy new sports car to the limits. Today there's not as much of a calling and this has a lot to do with the fact that most modern in-car GPS offer a safety camera database and associated warnings as standard.

Coyote Systems is obviously hoping that there's still enough of a market and with the release of its Mini Coyote, a one-stop solution to keeping one step ahead. It is apparently the world's first GPS speed camera alert system, using an established position on a road to compare alongside a database of camera locations.

Supplied in the box alongside the hardware is a Mini-USB charger cable and cigarette lighter adaptor for when the 10-hour battery life is up, an enclosure with a sticky back and a magnetic fastener for attaching it semi-permanently to the dashboard.

The first thing that struck us is that the unit is actually quite large, particularly compared to the mini GPS receiver units and slimline GPS devices that have entered the market recently. What's worse is that a relatively small, monochrome LCD only takes up a third of the front panel and while this is quite clear and informative, it makes you wonder exactly why the rest of it is so cumbersome.

Regardless, we took it out for a spin and did take note of a couple of nifty little features. By default the Mini Coyote shows the current time and speed, and where relevant the current speed limit and distance to a camera along with an audible beep. It also reports red lights which we guess



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may be useful as a bit of an early warning, though we wouldn't imagine that accidentally running through them would be a big enough problem to warrant a specialist device.

A colour-coded warning flashes to tell you how frequently a particular speed camera has been reported but again, we can't imagine it would have much practical purpose. What we did notice when testing alongside a couple of GPS devices is that the Mini Coyote does seem more capable in terms of both picking up every camera on the route we drove, and in the accuracy of the camera's position. This is a lot to do with the real-time updates as a two-button control allows users to report speed cameras on either side of the road that haven't yet been detected, which then updates Coyote's database to improve accuracy further.

Despite the relatively limited appeal of the device it is quite easy to use and very accurate, but as with most niche products there's a rather inevitable hurdle to jump before you can grace your motor with its presence.

A purchase of the base system with 3 months free subscription will set you back a whopping £199. After this time a monthly subscription costs £9.99, or £99.99 to receive real-time updates for a year. This will be prohibitively expensive for most, especially considering a full-blown GPS would cost half this with all of the obvious advantages thrown in, and on this basis we can't really see it catching on.

VERDICT

Despite being unnecessarily bulky and rather limited in terms of features, the Mini Coyote does the job of reporting speed camera positions (and red lights, if this appeals) very well. Information is presented clearly and audibly so it should be all but impossible to slip up, but we were left wondering exactly who would be able to justify the expense in the light of capable alternatives.

At a glance

What is it?

A speed camera alert system for your motor

Good

Clear visual and audible warnings, accurate positioning, reports current speed and distance to target

Bad

Bulky, unattractive design, limited array of features, extremely expensive

Verdict

Those in the market for a speed camera alert system will find this to be very capable, but for the price the Mini Coyote is nowhere near as practical as a standard GPS

Price £199

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10