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LD 814

As a conservation ethologist, I can offer ecological reasons why coyotes are important and why I believe LD 814 An Act to Restrict the Daytime and Nighttime Killing of Coyotes should be supported. However, instead of presenting a list of facts, I first want to share how coyotes are described on the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's (MDIFW) website: "Maine was once occupied by large predators such as wolves and mountain lions . . . over time, those species were extirpated from Maine [via indiscriminate and unwarranted killing], opening an ecological niche for a new predator . . . Coyotes are . . . highly intelligent and provide several valuable services to Maine's wildlife. Coyotes now fill a critical role in Maine as predators, assisting in the maintenance of a healthy ecosystem. Coyotes prey on a wide variety of species including small mammals, snowshoe hare, turkeys, and deer . . . [and] . . . fruits and berries when they are in season." MDIFW portrays coyotes as an important species here in Maine, yet management of coyotes dictates otherwise.

Humans are complex, and we tend to hold to our values and beliefs despite evidence that contradicts what we have been taught. This is certainly the case when it comes to the historical and current perspectives and treatment of species such as wolves, mountain lions, and coyotes. So rather than focusing on the science, I appeal to your sense of reason and ethical and moral obligations as representatives of Maine's citizens and its wildlife. If MDIFW considers coyotes "highly intelligent" and filling "a critical role in Maine as predators," why are they still subjected to unlimited year-round persecution that includes both day and night hunting, as well as targets for wildlife killing contests? Why are they not treated in a manner similar to bear and deer, both of which have more limited hunting seasons?

There is little published research about Maine's coyote population, hence, our perception that the coyote population is too high, decimating Maine's deer, and/or posing a threat to people is skewed because it is based on information put forth by a few rather than actual events. In fact, in Maine's 2020-2030 furbearer management plan, it was noted that coyotes do not have a negative impact on Maine's deer population and out of 368 animal complaints in 2019 and 2020, only 3 were verified to involve coyote conflicts.

While Maine's hunting tradition is a source of pride for some, many citizens prefer to coexist with wildlife rather than hunt it. LD 814 does not take away the privilege of coyote hunting. It simply establishes a shorter season and implements a fine and hunting license revocation for those hunting outside of the season, all of which are reasonable and coincide with current hunting regulations for other species.

There is no justification for the current excessive, year-round killing of coyotes, a practice that is based on the fears and perceptions of previous generations. Times have changed, as have society's views and perceptions of coexistence with, and treatment of, our wildlife. LD 814 is one important step toward aligning with those changes, and my hope is that you will support it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.