

TESTIMONY OF SUSANNA RICHER
IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 814 "An Act to Restrict the Daytime and Nighttime Killing of Coyote."
Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
April 3, 2023

Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of L.D. 814. The proposed legislation would implement reasonable day and night hunting seasons for Eastern coyotes, as is already done for all other game species in Maine. This reform is scientifically necessary and is long overdue.

A [recent poll in the Bangor Daily News](#) asked residents: "Can Mainers live in harmony with coyotes, or do you view them as a problem?" 78 percent of respondents said coyotes are not a problem in Maine. 38 percent of those respondents were hunters. One reply from Orono resident, Greg Kornelis, presents the issue before us today beautifully. He states:

"All predators are an integral part of our ecosystems. They keep populations of prey sustainable and genetically fit. This in turn protects plant populations and reshapes natural landscapes. Reduction of prey populations can even keep disease vectors under control. The state should protect our ecosystems by imposing limits on harvests of all our shared natural resources including coyotes. Sustainability and ecological health are keys to our survival."

In February, I attended a Maine Furbearer Management Planning Steering Committee meeting. At this meeting, I was thrilled to learn that [4 out of 5 biologists on the Canid Management Planning sub-committee voted in favor of implementing a closed season for coyotes in our state.](#) Read that again - 4 out of 5 biologists – two of which specialize in carnivores - in support of a closed season. Yet, this recommendation was excluded from the updated Furbearer Management Plan. I remember years ago a campaign from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife that included the slogan: "Trust our biologists." Let's abide by that concept and uphold the recommendations made by the majority of biologists who volunteered their expertise on the canid management sub-committee.

Many will speak today of coyote pups being orphaned and left to starve in their dens due to the current unrestricted hunting seasons. While that likely occurs, equally as disturbing is that some of these pups are killed right alongside their parents through a form of hunting called denning which involves killing the whole family in or around the den.

The coyote is the only game species in Maine that is excluded from the [Wanton Waste statute.](#)

How we "manage" coyotes in this state is wasteful, unproductive, and destructive. These critical predators are hunted indiscriminately; trapped, killed over bait piles, ripped apart alive by hounds, pursued during the day, during the night, in their dens, while raising pups, all year round. This is not sustenance hunting. It is not fair chase hunting. It is legalized aggravated animal cruelty and ecological destruction disguised as a predator management program. The program does not work, and worse, it is disruptive to our citizens, damaging to our ecosystems and risks the health of our wildlife populations.

It is time to make a change.

In closing, supporting the reforms proposed by L.D. 814 would give some needed relief to our landowners and coyotes, thus restoring some ethics, ecological health, and fairness to our predator "management" program. As a result, I hope this committee will vote "ought to pass". Thank you for your consideration.

Susanna Richer

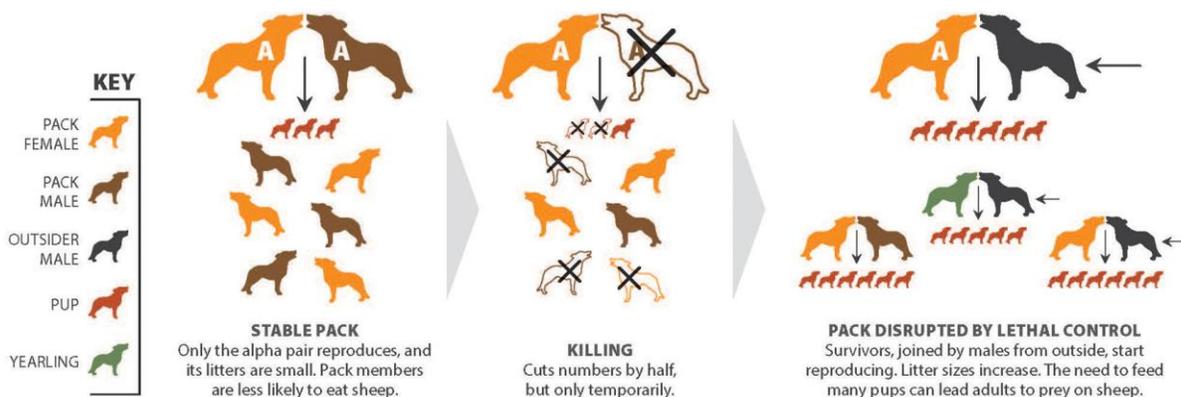
(Attachments & sources on following pages)

Why unregulated predator killing is damaging and ineffective “management” strategy.

- Indiscriminate killing of coyote as practiced in Maine is scientifically proven to be an ineffective means of population control. Many studies have shown when there are unregulated and ongoing attempts at killing coyotes, they respond with [“compensatory reproduction.”](#) This means that when there are attempts to reduce a stable population, coyotes respond by increasing the number and size of their litters. However, if left alone, to develop stable, healthy packs, coyotes will self-regulate their population to lower numbers. Stable, healthy coyote packs also tend to stay away from humans and only hunt intended prey, such as rodents.
- New coyotes will quickly replace coyotes removed from an area. Coyote pairs hold territories, which leave single coyotes (“floaters”) constantly looking for new places to call home.
- Coyotes play an important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems and species diversity. Through the predator/prey relationship, coyotes are critical to controlling disease transmission such as tick-borne illness and rabies. By killing these predators without restriction, we destroy ecosystems and encourage the spread of disease. Coyotes help reduce the numbers of tick-carrying rodents, leading to healthier deer and humans, and manage rabies vector animal populations (skunks, raccoons, and foxes). They also consume animal carcasses, increase biodiversity, remove sick animals from the gene pool, and protect crops. Through relentless slaughter of coyotes, we negatively impact our own health and the well-being of our wildlife populations. We are our own worst enemy.
- There is no peer reviewed biological evidence of any kind to support that aggressive efforts for decades to control coyotes in Maine has any effect in restoring the deer herd. None. Deer thrive in areas where the weather and habitat support their survival. They do not thrive in areas where the winters are exceptionally harsh and that do not have suitable overwintering habitat. Period.
- If the mission is to reduce conflicts with coyotes, there are many more [effective humane methods](#) available. Some of include removal of food attractants (e.g., bait piles) that lure coyotes into communities and hazing practices which change the behavior of problem coyotes by teaching them to avoid people and pets.

Why **KILLING** Doesn't Work

Shoot or poison coyotes and you will have just as many again within a year or two. Kill one or both members of the alpha pair (A)—the only one that normally reproduces—and other pairs will form and reproduce. At the same time, lone coyotes will move in to mate, young coyotes will start having offspring sooner, and litter sizes will grow.



Sources:

Understanding the compensatory reproduction response to killing coyotes

<http://www.projectcoyote.org/mediaroom/videos/understanding-the-compensatory-reproduction-response-to-killing-coyotes/>

SOLUTIONS for Coyote Conflicts: Why Killing Doesn't Solve Conflicts with Coyotes

https://www.animalsheltering.org/sites/default/files/content/coyote_conflict_solutions.pdf

Loved, hated and overrated: Here's what you had to say about coyotes in Maine

by Pete Warner February 1, 2023

<https://www.bangordailynews.com/2023/02/01/outdoors/what-you-had-to-say-coyotes-in-maine/>