

3 March 2025

Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Maine Legislature

RE: **LD 716, In support**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

I am a resident of Pembroke, in Washington County, and Ph.D. level certified senior ecologist through the Ecological Society of America, a 9000 member professional organization.

I support LD 716. Here's why.

To quote a 2024 MD [IFW blog post](#): "Unlike invasive species, most naturalized species, including coyotes, do not have a net negative impact on the environment."

1. In fact, it is well established that healthy ecosystem function requires a diverse set of players in that ecosystem, from apex predators like wolves, to mesopredators and scavengers like coyotes, to carnivores and herbivores lower in the food web. Coyotes in Maine are the closest thing we now have as an apex predator, now that wolves are gone. **Coyotes play an important role in a healthy, functioning ecosystem.**
2. **IFW recognizes the important role that coyotes play in the ecosystem**, reflected in the IFW Furbearer Plan 2020-2030.

IFW's Coyote Management Goals & Strategies in the Furbearer Plan include (starting p. 91):

Goal #1: "Maintain healthy, abundant coyote populations", and

Goal #4: "Increase the public's awareness, perceived value, and acceptance of the coyote as an important predator".

3. Deer hunters opposing LD 716 oppose a limit on open hunting season because they fear coyotes create lower deer populations.

But deer are not scarce.

[IFW data reveals](#) that in the 2022 hunting season, the most recent season of data I could find, Maine's deer hunters took 43,787 deer – **IFW states this is the highest total deer harvest on record.**

Also, is there really an established link between coyote control and deer populations in Maine?

What do IFW biologists say?

IFW says: ([IFW Furbearer Plan 2020-2030](#)):

[data] “suggests **coyote predation is not a significant source of mortality in central and southern Maine**; but in [far] northern Maine where habitat is compromised and winters are more severe, it can sometimes be a significant source.”

SOLUTION: A solution to a possible regional effect of coyotes on the deer population that is restricted to Northern Maine is to have a regional management plan: Northern Maine has fewer restrictions on coyote hunting than all other regions of Maine. That would be an appropriate amendment to this bill, based on IFW’s own data and findings.

It’s just not correct to state that a limited season of coyote hunting will decimate white-tailed deer populations all over the state.

In summary:

1. A coyote hunting season with reasonable limits, such as those proposed in LD 716, supports a healthy, balanced ecosystem in our state.
2. Putting some limits on coyote hunting by limiting open season to October 1st to March 31st each year is a balanced approach: it still allows hunting as a management tool.
3. It may be appropriate management to impose that proposed limited season everywhere but Northern Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Robin Hadlock Seeley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Robin Hadlock Seeley, Ph.D.

Pembroke

Email: robin.hadlock.seeley@maine.edu