

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and esteemed members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife committee, my name is Tyler Brown, I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 716, "An Act to Restrict the hunting of Coyotes"

This legislation is unwarranted as the population of the Eastern Coyote according to all available scientific data, is healthy and stable, yet this bill seeks to cut the available hunting seasons in half when there is no scientific need to do so. Under current Maine law, a licensed hunter may hunt coyotes during the day year round. Night hunting is also allowed for a hunter with a night hunting permit but only after Maine's deer hunting seasons conclude in mid-December. This law seems unclear as to whether it would cut the night hunting season to just three months or eliminate night hunting altogether, which occurs during a time when management of their population is most critical and the majority of harvests take place. What is clear is this bill would cut the available time to hunt coyotes in half with no scientific justification.

The Eastern Coyote (*Canis Latrans*) is not native to Maine, they began expanding their range eastward from the great plains of the west a century ago, interbreeding with the last remnants of the gray wolf and dogs leading to this new subspecies of coyote becoming larger and highly adaptable to an environment not of their own. With the expatriation of the gray wolf in the late 19th century, the Eastern Coyote began appearing in Maine in the late 1930's and within forty years became permanently established as an apex predator. Not long afterwards the Eastern Coyote began having a significant impact on wildlife prey populations including whitetail deer.

From 1978 to 1989 a study of (863) deer killed by coyotes led by IFW deer biologist Gerry Lavigne found that coyotes preyed upon deer of all age classes, sexes and health status. This predation had significant impacts on fawn and doe mortality, especially in the north woods of Maine. Fawn mortality in particular was most impacted during the summer months as they are highly vulnerable to predation during their first few months as evidenced by the Eastern Coyote Assessment of 1999 (Citation below) provided by Walter J Jakubas which found that whitetail deer are the main food source for denning coyotes during their whelping cycle in June to August. The 1999 assessment also noted that the coyote population of 1999 was estimated at 10,000-12,000..

The health and population of Maine's wildlife herds depends on sound scientific management of all wildlife species. MEDIFW current estimates range from 10,000-12,000 coyotes, the same as the estimates from the 1999 Jakubas study. Coyote Harvests according to pages 83 and 84 of the 2020-2030 Furbearer Management Plan created by Maine's Department for Inland Fisheries and Wildlife "Since 1998, the annual registered harvest (trapping and hunting combined) has been between 1,000 and 2,700 coyotes. Registered harvests have remained relatively stable over the last decade (2010-2019), averaging 1,500 coyotes each year. These figures remained stable despite two expansions of the coyote night hunting season by two weeks in 2009 and by two months in 2011.

This scientific evidence shows that reduction of coyote hunting seasons is unnecessary as the harvest numbers and population estimates clearly illustrate a sustainable and stable coyote population here in Maine despite increases in both season lengths and coyote hunting opportunities. This legislation would hinder the effective management of an apex predator population by cutting or eliminating the night season for coyotes, and cutting the daytime season by 50% which would have significant detrimental impacts on sustainable herd populations of whitetail deer and other wildlife species.

I encourage this committee to unanimously vote "ought not to pass" on LD 716 in order for Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to continue their effective, science based management of our wildlife.

Thank you for your time in considering my testimony and for your service to our state.

Tyler Brown

Citation:

<https://www.maine.gov/ifw/docs/coyote-speciesassessment.pdf>