

Nola Prevost
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LD 1293

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Committee. My name is Nola Prevost and I'm from Brewer, Maine. My experience as a Maine Master Naturalist, a conservation writer, and a lifelong Mainer, compels me to share what I have learned about coyotes from an ecological and conservation perspective.

As many of us already may know, Coyotes are a keystone species in Maine, doing all of the heavy lifting as the dominant carnivore since Maine's ancient carnivores, like the Timber Wolf and Panther, have gone extinct due to, you guessed it, over hunting and habitat destruction.

The benefits that coyotes bring to the health of the ecosystem are well documented, from partnering with landowners in defending territories from other coyotes, to ensuring public health by taking out sick deer, as well as innumerable rodents who are the harbingers of Lyme disease.

And we also know that losing keystone carnivores can result in drastic changes to the environment.

Does anyone here even know how many coyotes there are in the state? Conservative estimates put them in the magnitude of 10,000-12,000 (10 times LESS than the deer population). But even this number is rough due to the fact that biologists use stable populations to calculate a species' population density, and the Coyote has not been able to establish a stable population in at least 50 years. Killing contests can murder entire lineages of coyote families, and any left must survive, traumatized, without the guidance of their parents or social structures. This leads to more pups that lack the proper rearing to learn how to survive in the wild and are forced to go after riskier kills (like livestock) out of desperation. This would not happen if we allow coyotes the chance to stabilize their population the way nature has done for millions of years.

Lastly, this bill is not about hunting coyotes. It's about killing them. There is a huge difference. Hunting comes with a code of ethics, in which nothing is wasted, and conservation of the whole ecosystem is prioritized over any one individual. But these killing contests spit in the face of every ethical hunter, and every single living creature that needs this balanced ecosystem in order to survive. That root word, "eco", means 'home,' and this land is the coyotes' home too, as much as it is ours. That's why I urge you to vote in favor of LD1293, and in so doing, work towards building and preserving our home for ourselves and our Native Songdog, Coyote.

Thank you