

My testimony is in support of LD 814

An Act to Restrict the Daytime and Nighttime Killing of Coyotes

I am a scientist, a carnivore ecologist. My work is in the conservation of carnivores, and as such I spend much of my time with our Maine community members, educating them about species they know very little of.

Many Maine people encourage me to speak the science, and I do, in many forms and with diverse people. But I have found that for our people to truly understand the science and therefore treat the carnivores in accordance with their knowledge, they need to understand what living with respect for them looks like. Can you imagine what that looks like?

So I would like to share a short letter one of our farmers sent to me. This is what she wrote: And this is what the science lived, looks like...

I spend hours on a tractor flail mowing the blueberry fields in the Fall of the year. This year I had company ~ a beautiful female Coyote. She would come out of the forest when she heard the tractor and begin mouse hunting. At times we would be only 20 to 30 feet apart. I would stop the tractor, and talk and whistle to her. She would then look up from her hunting and wag her tail at me.

I'd make another pass on the field and we would repeat the greeting again. One time she crossed directly in front of me, just looking up and blinking those golden eyes at me. She was so much like my own lab. Over and over again...nose to the ground, butt in the air, tail wagging...then pounce for the mouse! I swear...once she wanted to show me her catch....or maybe wanted to share it with me. She would toss it up in the air for me to see, as if to say "See what I can do!"

There was a mutual trust and respect between us. If someone unfamiliar showed up, she would quickly disappear. I was so glad she still had all her wild instincts. I often wonder if she had learned stories passed down through Coyote generations on our farm...to not fear the woman who learned to respect the Coyote long ago in the blueberry field.

This is what supporting biodiversity, protection from disease, balance of wildlife populations looks like in the real world. Our farmers get it. They live on the land and they understand how everything is connected.

The passage of this bill will begin to take our state to that relationship of respect, and with it, the healing of our landscape.

Geri Vistein

Morrill