



Pinny Beebe-Center  
Senator, District 12

**THE MAINE SENATE**  
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

## Sen. Beebe-Center testimony for LD 1293 "An Act To Prohibit Coyote killing Contests in Maine"

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. My name is Senator Pinny Beebe-Center, and I represent Senate District 12, which includes all of Knox County except for the towns of Washington and Isle Au Haut. I am pleased to introduce LD 1293, "An Act to Prohibit Coyote Killing Contests in Maine," on behalf of Maine Friends of Animals.

I first moved to Knox County as a young adult, a sentimental value as my father first posting in the coastguard was in Rockland. I learned quickly how the state valued its rich natural beauty, its conservation initiatives, and its history of hunting. I learned about the animals we tracked, the rules of nature and about a code of ethics that included using the animal we killed and appreciating a sense of fair chase.

Flash forward 50 years and unfortunately, I now see Maine being a part of a national conversation on killing contests. It is not an activity that would have met any standards of hunting ethics 50 years ago. How did we get here? Others will testify to exactly what happens at these events are, but the title of the bill is clear.

When did killing the most animals in a specific time by any means possible to win a prize become part of Maine's hunting ethics? Wanton killing of wildlife for a reward undermines the public's view of hunting and gives all hunters a needless black eye. How did we get from a long-standing tradition of conservation and hunting ethics to this mindless and useless slaughter?

The two main events in the state, one in Penobscot County and one in Aroostook County together, average 278 coyotes taken each year. It is estimated we have 15,000 coyotes in the state. That means just over 1% of the coyotes culled each year are by these contests. Keeping these few events does not make sense given the public relations nightmare it is, and will continue to be, for all Maine hunters. It would seem this bill is doing Maine hunters a favor.

I wondered how much these coyote killing contests put Maine as an outlier; moreover, were there still wildlife organizations that held hunters to a higher standard? I found there were, which I have included with my testimony. It is a list of seven national wildlife conservation organizations' statements regarding



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killing contests. In total, it shows an impressive group of respected hunting organizations that find this practice unacceptable. And where "sportsmanship" still means something.

Lastly, this bill is not about coyote control. It is solely about one specific activity. An activity that is ineffective and in no way represents what I learned growing up about hunting traditions in Maine. This bill is just about banning the most egregious form of killing that is unusually cruel, pointless and very unethical. And despite what the opposition may say, it is simply about this one activity that Maine does not need nor want.

I wholeheartedly support the ending of these few killing contests that have no place in our state. They do not reflect any hunting ethics I ever grew up on. In fact, if these coyote killing contests are not cruel and unethical, then what is? Has the meaning 'sportsmanlike' become an irrelevant term in Maine today?

As you will hear from others, there is a national trend to end these killing contests — I would like to see our proud hunting state join that trend. I thank you all for your time and consideration, and welcome you to direct questions to the advocates who will be speaking after me.

## **NATIONAL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS' STATEMENTS REGARDING KILLING CONTESTS**

**The Boone & Crockett Club** *Established in 1887, Boone & Crockett's mission is to promote the conservation and management of wildlife, especially big game, and its habitat, to preserve and encourage hunting and to maintain the highest ethical standards of fair chase and sportsmanship in North America.*

- Fair chase is described as "the ethical, sportsmanlike, and lawful pursuit and taking of any free-ranging wild, native North American big game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper advantage over such animals."
- Boone & Crockett also places strong emphasis on treating hunted animals with respect, minimizing pain and suffering of an animal by killing it as quickly as possible, and not wasting it.

**The Izaak Walton League of America** *For over 100 years, the Izaak Walton League of America has promoted community-based conservation and volunteer science while advocating for strong state and national policies to protect our air, water and wildlife.*

- The League recognizes the intrinsic value of predatory species and their important ecological roles.
- There is no justification for widespread destruction of animals classified as predators.
- The League opposes payment of bounties on predators or varmints.

**National Wildlife Federation** *America's largest and most trusted conservation organization, fighting since 1936 for the conservation values that are woven into the fabric of our nation's collective heritage.*

- Proponents say predator killing contests are needed to manage wildlife that interfere with livestock or beneficial native species. Critics say it's an unnecessarily brutal practice that can end up producing even more predatory behavior. In the middle are the experts responsible for managing wildlife populations and human expectations.

**The Wildlife Society** *An international non-profit involved in wildlife stewardship since 1937, The Wildlife Society works to improve wildlife conservation in North America by advancing the science of wildlife management, promoting continuing education of wildlife professionals, and advocating for sound, science-based wildlife policy.*

- Discourages contests that adversely affect the wildlife resource or the public appreciation of wildlife resources.
- Supports that wildlife killed must be put to legitimate uses.
- Opposes all contests that intentionally wound animals in a manner that causes excess pain and suffering, kill parents resulting in orphaned, dependent young, or devalue wildlife by showing disrespectful photos of piles of dead animals.
- Recognizes there is little evidence to support the use of killing contests for controlling predator populations.
- Recognizes that while species killed in contests can be legally killed in most states, making a contest of it may undermine the public's view of ethical hunting.

**Wildlife for All** *Wildlife for All was created in 2021 as an offshoot of the 30yr old Southwest Environmental Center and is a national movement to reform state wildlife management to be more ecologically-driven, democratic, and compassionate, focusing on protecting wild species and ecosystems.*

- Despite their claims of “management,” wildlife killing contests exist for one reason: the thrill of the kill. These events turn wildlife into moving targets, rewarding people for slaughtering as many animals as possible. Wildlife killing contests are not about conservation. They are about cruelty. They are about turning the systematic extermination of a species into a game.
- The claim that coyotes are a “threat” to wildlife is not only false, it’s completely nonsensical. How can a species that evolved as part of an ecosystem be a danger to that very system? Coyotes play a crucial role keeping rodent populations in check, preventing disease outbreaks, and maintaining the food web. Removing them disrupts these natural processes, leading to unintended consequences and ecosystem instability.
- The idea that wildlife needs to be “managed” by humans, particularly through indiscriminate killing, is rooted in a flawed and outdated worldview. Nature has successfully regulated itself for millennia without human intervention. It is only when we interfere—by exterminating predators, fragmenting habitats, and altering food sources—that ecosystems begin to unravel.
- **The research is clear: lethal control does not reduce coyote populations long-term.** Instead, it disrupts their social structure and triggers an increase in reproduction and migration, often leading to *more* coyotes in the area.

**International Hunter Education Association** *IHEA-USA is the professional education association affiliated with every US-based hunter education program. Its mission is to continue the heritage of hunting worldwide by developing safe, responsible, knowledgeable and involved hunters.*

- We don’t like anything that smacks of commercialization with money or prizes. Anything that doesn’t honor the animals grates on us and seems inherently wrong. These contests create very poor PR for hunters.

**Orion - The Hunter’s Institute** *Since 1993, Orion has been protecting the future of hunting by providing leadership on ethical and philosophical issues and to promote fair chase and responsible hunting.*

- Orion has been “dedicated to improving the image of hunting with an emphasis on fair chase ethics,” founder Jim Posewitz said. “I don’t think any form of hunting should be competitive. I think we need to encourage a more sensitive relationship with the animals we hunt.”
- “Those of us who value hunting don’t need PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and the Humane Society to give hunting a black eye,” Posewitz told *Mountain Journal*. “We’re doing that all by ourselves, against ourselves, with the proliferation of self-promoting videos on Youtube and selfies of people posing with dead animals on Facebook and other forms of social media. We’ve become our own worst enemy.” - Jim Posewitz, Orion founder and member of the Montana Outdoor Hall of Fame