

March 3, 2025

Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife committee,

My name is Gregory Smith and I live in Rockland. I am writing in support of LD716 – An Act to Restrict the Hunting of Coyotes.

Coyotes are a crucial component of Maine's ecosystem. They help to keep other populations in check and healthier. When herbivores do not have enough predation, their populations will increase to the point where many individuals become sick or starve. Predators remove the sick and injured animals, leaving the healthier ones to breed. This is in contrast to human hunters, many of whom take large, healthy individuals such as mature bucks.

Because coyotes kill deer and rodents, they help to reduce the dangers of Lyme disease. Without coyotes keeping deer and mouse populations in check, there are many more deer ticks that could potentially be carrying the Lyme bacterium.

When coyote populations are stable, they have a fairly low birth rate, and only the older, more experienced individuals will breed. However, when coyotes are hunted, younger individuals will breed in an effort to bring their numbers back up. These younger coyotes are not as knowledgeable about hunting, and are more likely to attack livestock and pets in order to feed themselves and their pups.

I own some property in Surry, with a house surrounded by fields and many acres of woods. In the past, I would often hear coyotes howling at night. There were deer in the area, but it was fairly unusual to see one – especially during the day. We also had porcupines which were fun to watch and caused little permanent damage. Now, I no longer hear coyotes and the deer population has grown a lot. It's now common to see deer during the day, even walking across our lawn. And the porcupines (which coyotes will kill and eat) have become destructive and killed several trees around the house. I do not know for sure that coyotes have been removed from that area, but the signs certainly point to it. Hopefully a hunting restriction will allow coyotes to come back in to that area and we will have a healthier ecosystem.

Personally, I would like to see an end to all hunting of coyotes. But I support LD716 as being a step in the right direction. I urge you all to vote to send this bill to the full legislature with the recommendation that it pass.

Thank you,

Greg Smith