

Testimony of Geri Vistein

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the committee

My name is Geri Vistein and I am a wildlife biologist, focusing on carnivore conservation here in Maine. I am the Founder of Maine's Coyote Center.

I am here to support LD 716 An Act to Restrict the Hunting of Coyotes

The whole of Maine's landscape has been waiting for the Apex predator to return. This land has been without the wolf and cougar for over 150 years. Now Coyote has come to take their place. But there are those in our society who do not recognize their immense value. And so the age old response to ignorance and fear, is to kill.

But then there are many, many Mainers who welcome Coyote here because they see with their own eyes and in their everyday lives how fortunate we are to have them here.

Our farmers: I have had the sheer delight in listening to the farmers I visit tell me of how Coyote is helping them on their farm: In addition to following the farmer's tractor as they cut the hay and picking off innumerable rodents, several of our vegetable farmers have shared that with Coyotes present on their farms, the herd of deer who show up in the evening to chew away on the farmer's hard work of the day, are kept on the move insteadjust because Coyote is present. Coyote is helping our famers to be successful!

And our farmers who care for their livestock welcome Coyote as well. They understand that deer carry a brain worm that they live well with, but can cause death in other hoofed animals. Keeping deer on the move and out of pastures where farmers hoofed animals graze, is a vital role coyotes play on these farms.

And then there is Lyme disease and other deadly bacterial diseases running rampant in our state. These serious diseases count on the presence of two players: deer and rodents. Adult ticks breed on the big deer bodies, and then drop to the ground, and their thousands of larva begin looking for their blood meal, mostly from rodents. The cycle continues with the tick's infected nymph form, the most dangerous to humans, as it emerges from the leaf litter the following May. Where is the predator in this scenario? What happened to the balance in Nature? The predator is missing.

Many of our Maine people are suffering from Lyme disease and families are spending thousands and thousands of dollars in medical costs.

The Coyotes in Maine need to stay alive, most especially when our farmers need them to be on the land and when there are more and more ticks being infected by rodents, who carry these dangerous bacterium. Respecting how Nature works is to our greatest benefit!

Geri Vistein
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