

1/25/18

Attn: House Fish and Wildlife Committee

Representatives: David Deen, Mary Sullivan, Steve Beyor, David Ainsworth, Paul Lefebvre, James McCullough, Carol Ode, Trevor Squirrel, Thomas Terenzini

For too long VT Fish and Wildlife has catered to the few at the expense, in my opinion, of wildlife, homeowners, the non-hunting public, and public safety. Laws are too lax and enforcement too little. There are only two game wardens for all of Chittenden County ó they do not necessarily work on the same days or at the same times. Essentially, it's a 'free for all.' The open killing season on coyotes and lack of regulation, as well as atrocious killing 'contests' epitomize the Fish and Wildlife Department's and Board's unethical and inept mismanagement. Killing "contests" in all forms are reckless and irresponsible. Coyote killing contests put the public at risk. It puts people's companion animals at risk. I would like to see coyotes not killed at all. But, minimally, if killing coyotes is the entertainment and recreational 'sport' for a few, there needs to be limits.

A "houndsmen's" club in VT is sponsoring and promoting a coyote killing contest in Feb. Hounding in itself is sadistic and horrid. Harassing an animal with dogs and that animal then being bitten and ripped apart in no way benefits the environment, animals, VT's wildlife, or the public. It flies in the face of true conservation .

The good 'ole boy's club mentality of VT Fish & Wildlife with their outdated and conflicting arguments -- that killing coyotes in any way, at any age, or at any time, somehow 'benefits' the public, conservation, wildlife, and even the coyotes themselves, or is in the name of conservation, is absurd. Vermont is considered a progressive state by many, until they are made aware of the complete lack of hunting regulations and protections for wildlife and non-hunting Vermonters. Fish and Wildlife ó both the Department and Board need a complete gutting and rehab. Only legislation is going to protect Vermont wildlife, public safety, homeowners, and coyotes from the irrational and harmful policies and decision-making of the current Fish and Wildlife Board and Dept.

If a person dies because they are 'shot' by a hunter, it's a hunting 'accident' ó when it should be manslaughter. You can't drink and drive, but you can drink and shoot. Hunters seemingly don't even have to follow public noise ordinances. If a hunter shoots someone's cat because they think that cat is a coyote, maybe they should not be allowed to hunt in the first place, especially if they are not capable or equipped to know what they are shooting at. And if they do kill someone's companion animal, they should be in jail for cruelty charges. What happens when one of these self-proclaimed 'sportsmen' kills a child or a child's dog? 'Oops' it's a hunting 'accident' doesn't cut it and is unacceptable.

It's already been shown scientifically with up to date research that killing coyotes causes more harm than good, and has no benefit. There is no environmental reason for killing coyotes at any age, in any way, and at any time. There is no safety reason to have an open season on coyotes. Killing contests and open seasons are of no benefit to homeowners, hikers, campers, birdwatchers, mountain bikers, kayakers, bicyclists, runners, mountaineers, rock climbers, skiers, paddle boarders, people walking and running with their dogs, or wildlife photographers.

Those who like to kill coyotes do not own coyotes or Vermont, nor should they. There needs to be constraints. Coyote killing contests and the open season on coyotes is appalling. The public needs a say and the way VT Fish & Wildlife 'manages' wildlife needs to change.

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