

TO: VT House Committee
Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife

FROM: Peggy Struhsacker

DATE: January 22, 2018

To be submitted for comment on the January 25th hearing on Coyotes.

Dear Rep. Deen and Members of the Committee,

Again, I want to thank the committee for allowing me to submit comments in response to H60 for the January 25th public hearing that I am unable to attend. My past professional experience as a wildlife biologist with National Wildlife Federation and Natural Resources Defense Council in Vermont and across the country on gray wolf and Canada lynx ESA recovery and protection, gave me the opportunity and the scientific knowledge to understand the eastern coyote ecological niche in the Northeast.

The “coyote killing contests” brought to the forefront that the coyotes have no protection in our state. Currently, I do not know the absolute position of VT Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and my hope is the department will ask the Board to outlaw wildlife killing contests and move forward on a quite season that would give the coyotes the same protection as other species(ie: protection under law to not be able to kill coyotes 24/7). **If the department continues with the same deep-rooted position of the past, I recommend that the Committee move forward and recommend within the bill a law to outlaw “wildlife killing contests” and recommend the Department craft a proposed season to protect the coyote.**

Wildlife killing contests are ethically indefensible events allowing participants to kill wildlife and to win prizes. They are ecologically reckless, not only harming individual animals, but also altering predator-prey dynamics, disrupting the social dynamics of coyote family unit, and increasing the threats to public safety, all for what!, fun and games.

Vermont has the opportunity to set another national trend by moving from the old paradigm of wildlife management to a new paradigm of managing wildlife species that are more responsible , science based, and ethical wildlife stewardship.

Scientific literature shows that coyote populations that are not exploited (that is hunted, trapped, or controlled by other means) form stable “extended family” social structures that naturally limit coyote populations through defense of territory and the suppression of breeding by subordinate female members of the family group. Indiscriminate killing of coyotes disrupts the social stability resulting in increased reproduction and greater pup survival.¹ A principle of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model is “*Wildlife Should Only Be Killed for a Legitimate Purpose*”.²

The eastern coyote is here to stay. Past killing and extermination of our large carnivores (gray wolves and mountain lions) opened the niche for coyote expansion from west to the east. These are the only two species that were able to control the coyote numbers. It is our responsibility in 2018 to manage all wildlife species equally.

Thank you.

Peggy Struhsacker

¹ http://www.predatordefense.org/docs/coyotes_about_Dr_Crabtree_06-21-12.pdf
http://www.predatordefense.org/docs/coyotes_letter_Dr_Crabtree_06-21-12.pdf

² <http://wildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/North-American-model-of-Wildlife-Conservation.pdf>