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Coyotes : Dave Borneman's advice request is not unusual in today's world of the quandary of what to do to walk the tightrope of differing public opinions on wildlife management. Maybe a historical perspective is in order . In early colonial times Europeans found a land with plenty of game with a reasonable balance of predators and prey. But the colonials didn't recognize their own effect of over furbearer taking and market hunting and alas, the passenger pigeon became extinct and many other specie became crucially extirpated or decimated at least. Man's havoc upon the land - over harvesting of timber, mining and agricultural degradation of stream water quality almost lost the shad from Pennsylvania's waters, not to mention many other lesser known flora and fauna. . I could go on in ad finitum. We recognize today that the imbalances of certain predator - prey relationships changed the balance of biodiversity to the point now that the replacement of the wolf and cougar by overpopulations of native foxes along with the mushrooming coyote population have created a significant crisis for many species.

Yes Lisa, suburban and rural families today must be concerned about Fido and Fluffy falling prey to coyotes but I feel the effect of coyotes along with increasing hawk and very stable owl populations on my tree farm in northern Dauphin County are having a significant negative effect on many wild species as well. All too frequent sightings of coyotes and found deer carcasses all year around suggest the increasing population of coyotes may be a significant factor in the " no deer in the woods " retort of unsuccessful deer hunters. It is not unusual to find one, two or three coyote track sets in less than a square mile of sampled area (not to mention the one bobcat and numerous fox , both red and grey).

The effect of these canine predators along with the raptors has significant effect on the stability of nesting turkeys and grouse along with a myriad of other ground nesting birds. Stocked pheasants and quail no longer stand a chance in areas with marginal habitat . How one can classify the coyote as a " critical part of the biodiversity " concerns me. The coyote shares the same characteristics of most invasives - that of being placed (by natural migration , NOT the PGC) into the Pennsylvania environment in the absence of a natural predator to control its population . I suggest man must be that predator. Mange and disease appear to have limited effect on controlling coyote populations. In my opinion, with the significant increase of coyotes statewide over the last 30 years we may be seeing their effect of a biodiversity catastrophe for many species at the jaws of uncontrolled coyotes compounded by the limitations of the uneducated human siciety. Having taught biology and ecology for 28 years I am still amazed at how many people never realize the complexity of predator- prey relationships and the balancing forces that effect them. Lest we evisit the lynx and the snowshoe hare graph from 10th grade biology or it will haunt us! In my opinion, promoting the coyote in such a manner is not the answer.

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