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Subject: PABIODIV: Coyotes: Comments on Roy's questions
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Date: Sun, 27 Mar 2005 19:39:38 -0500 (EST)

Roy, Thank goodness someone is asking these important questions. The limitation of the use the lynx - snowshoe hare example in science teaching is that the data used to draw the conclusions came from primarily seasonal (winter) trapping records of the Hudson Bay Company! Ah, the human predator effect exposed ! In my opinion , the crucial component in evaluating any predator - prey relationship study is the ramifications of " lag time ". In the more northern range of North America the snowshoe hare may be an " easier " prey for lynx in the winter (prime trapping season) so the data may be somewhat skewed as a result. My concern with the coyote problem in PA is that much more dramatic damage may be happening to ground nesting birds , game and songbirds, etc, because of the "lag time" effect that once a species population is negatively effected by the coyote (new predator) those specie may not return to the same area in migration behavior in respect that many species of songbirds returning to the proximate area for reneating on a yearly basis. Compounding this issue are forest fragmentation, and the effect of invasive plants changing the microhabitat for many low (close to ground) nesting species. Once many of these species populations are decimated they cannot rebound and return to the same locality behaviorally. I was accused by one respondent of being of the "hunter" mentality on this issue. That is not the case. I am looking at a variety of components and effects of coyote and other predators on all fauna, not just game species. Now, in many areas Fido and Fluffy are becoming the " easy prey " of the coyote.

I will not consider the moose - wolf study to be relative here because it is a closed study. But in a sense one may suggest that the "closure" effect of fragmentation of habitat may be effective in that results of man's effects on land fragmentation may have been a cause to "funnel" coyote populations eastward over the US over time from their historical west to midwest range. One has to ask the question " Why did the coyote range extend eastward as it did? Possibly the rapid change of habitat in the midwest accelerated the eastwardmigration of coyotes into PA. The scuttlebutt comment often heardat the PGC booth at the Eastern Sports Show this year was "I know a guy who heard from a guy who saw a truck load of coyotes coming east of Route 80, it broke down, and they had to let out all the coyotes" or that "the PGC imported coyotes to cull the deer population because the forestry industry is complaining about the brouse line and no tree regeneration"!

The second question is answered with many coyotes being sighted, photographed with night cameras, and shot all over PA. Cunning they are and if you think the truckload incident could happen - try to livetrapp a coyote - HA! The 2005 - 14th Annual Mosquito Creek Sportsmen Association 3 day coyote hunt (35 county data) shows an increase to 102 kills by 4373 registered participants (<http://www.mosquitocreeksportsmen.com/data>) as compared to 53 kills by 4192 participants in 2004 (Ron Santori, MCSA, personal communication today). Does anyone not think we have a problem with coyotes in PA?

Question #3 An important consideration of the carcass examination is that coyotes have an interesting behavior. We found a deer carcass in Nov '03 less than a week old whose entire hind quarters down to the knee joints were removed through the visceral cavity without one puncture in the hide! With talking to coyote experts this seems to be classic behavior out west in areas occupied by both wolves and cougars that simply tear the carcass apart. Cougars in PA? Don't go there! Additionally, on another winter kill (Feb '02) the same observation was made along with confirmed coyote tracks associated with a stress kill of a doe on ice and crusted snow after an ice storm where 2 coyote track sets and 3 different deer tracks covered approximately 2 acres. I came upon this incident after getting a snap look at two coyotes together when I interrupted their feeding ('02). One week later I found a full carcass yearling doe in the same area that may have succumbed in the same incident. Evidently the coyotes hadn't found it. I dragged it to the site of the other carcass and within a week it was dismembered in the same manner as well.

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