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STATUS OF THE COYOTE IN THE NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES
--Third Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference--

by Robert E. Chambers 1/

This report represents a summary of information derived from responses to mail questionnaires from the state wildlife agencies in 16 northern states extending from Maine to Minnesota with minor modifications by the author where experience deemed it feasible.

Coyotes-historically present in prairie regions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan-have extended their range eastward to the Atlantic Ocean and are now present throughout most of the northeastern states with the exception of Delaware and the major metropolitan areas of Philadelphia and New York City. Of the eastern states only New York has suggested that their population may have arisen from original stock. Some range expansion continues in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New Jersey. Estimated statewide populations are highest in Minnesota (40,000), Michigan (25,000), Wisconsin (14,000) and Illinois (12,500) where highest densities are 100/100 mi^2. Highest densities in the eastern portion of the region are in Maine (55/100 mi^2), New York (40/100 mi^2) and Vermont (10 family units/ 100 mi^2) with the highest numbers in Maine (12,000) and New York (10,000).

Coyotes are still unprotected (no legal status) in 8 of the 16 states-Minnesota, Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Delaware. Since 1972 coyotes have achieved the status of furbearer (F) or game animal (G) in the following states: Wisconsin (G), Michigan (F), Illinois (F), Indiana (F,G), Ohio (F), New York (F,G), Vermont (F, G), Massachusetts (G), Connecticut (F) and New Jersey (F). No states currently pay bounties.

The only expressed desires for changes in status were 1) Add to the furbearer list-New Hampshire and 2) Legalize or improve hunting control-Vermont, New Jersey.

Stated coyote management objectives of wildlife agencies included the following: 1) Manage to benefit hunters, trappers and other recreationists-Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, New York, Vermont, Maine, Connecticut and New Jersey; 2) Maintain population commensurate with habitat and human needs-Massachusetts; 3) Maintain current population-Rhode Island; 4) No specific effort to change population-Michigan, New Hampshire; 5) Assist with and/or reduce damage problems-Ohio, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey; 6) Establish/improve monitoring of coyote populations-Minnesota, Massachusetts, Delaware.

Only 2 state wildlife agencies-Minnesota and Delaware-perceived a management conflict with livestock and/ or agricultural agencies in their state. All other states perceived there to be no conflict.

Many states did report existing controversies and concerns by the public regarding coyotes as follows: 1) Threat to deer-New York, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts; 2) Threat to livestock-Minnesota, Indiana, New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode

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Island, New Jersey; 3) Threat to humans-Connecticut, New Jersey; 4) Threat to pets-Connecticut, Rhode Island; 5) Threat to foxes-Minnesota.

The reported number of coyotes taken annually for damage control purposes was: Minnesota 100-500; Maine 300; New York <100; Connecticut 55+; Pennsylvania 3-10; Rhode Island 4; New Jersey 0-1; Illinois-a few.

Highest annual take by hunting and trapping occurs in Minnesota (12,000), Indiana (8,600), Illinois (7,500) and Michigan (5,500). Highest take in the eastern portion of the region occurs in New York (2,200), Maine (1,800) and Vermont (354). The take in Wisconsin, Ohio and Pennsylvania is 2,250, 200 and 300 respectively. All other states each report fewer than 60 kills per year. Trapping take exceeds that by hunting in all states except Illinois and Indiana where hunting accounts for nearly 70 percent of the total take in both states and in Massachusetts where the leghold trap is banned. Annual take data are obtained in 6 states from furbuyer reports, in 5 states by pelt tagging, in 2 states by mail surveys and in 1 state by mandatory report.

Coyote hunting practices included the following: 1) Chasing with dogs-Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, New York, Maine; 2) Predator calls-Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut; 3) Snow-tracking-Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana; 4) Drives-Indiana; 5) Incidental to other seasons-Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut.

Coyote management information needs were identified as follows: 1) Improved population monitoring-Minnesota, Indiana; 2) Relationship of coyote and fox populations-Wisconsin; 3) More general knowledge-Pennsylvania.

Eleven state agencies reported coyote research activities now or in the past. Most research in states with historically native coyote populations has focused on ecology, food habits, population trends and population dynamics; research in the more recently colonized states has focused on distribution, taxonomy and sex-age structure.

Research by several universities has focused on ecology, interaction with deer and fox, food habits, taxonomy and behavior.