

KILLING COYOTES IS AN INEFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT TOOL AND HAS CONTRIBUTED TO EXPANSION OF COYOTE TERRITORY

Study of coyotes in new documentary 'American Bolshevik' shows human-provided food sources drive conflicts; lethal control often results in greater conflict.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, March 17, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- ['American Bolshevik'](#), the award-winning documentary from Lemon Martini Productions, explores conflicts with coyotes and the forces that have caused the expansion of their territory throughout the United States. The film is available on [Amazon](#), [Apple TV](#), Google Play, and VUDU in the US, Canada, and other countries.



A coyote basks in the sun. Credit: Dan Licht Cinematographer

The feature length film reveals that conflicts are primarily driven by human activities such as intentional or inadvertent feeding of coyotes, which can condition these wild animals to lose their fear of humans and results in greater numbers of coyotes.

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Dr. Numi Mitchell

“Coyotes reproduce more and have more offspring if they have a lot of food. If they don't have a lot of food they drop their own population,” states Dr. Numi Mitchell of the Narragansett Bay Coyote Study (NBCS) in Rhode Island. The study found that the food that was making coyotes so abundant was being provided by local residents. “We found piles of dead livestock on farms that would sustain a coyote group all winter long. Feral cat colonies were a surprise. Coyotes learned, just as the cats do, that the lady comes every day and drops off food. Coyotes also eat

garbage and compost. When you have unsecured food sources associated with people, coyotes like to hang around, especially when you have some closet feeders embedded in the neighborhood.”

The NBCS began nearly two decades ago in response to an increase in sightings and conflicts with coyotes on Aquidneck Island, which encompasses the tony resort city of Newport, Rhode Island, known for its sailing, polo, and music festivals. As a result of this ground-breaking study, each of the towns on Aquidneck Island have enacted “no-feeding ordinances” to ensure that residents are not conditioning coyotes to overcome their natural wariness of humans. The towns also actively educate residents on strategies to reduce conflict, including “hazing” to limit future contact.

Woven between this modern-day conflict with coyotes, *American Bolshevik* tells the story of the coyote's expansion into New England long after the slaughter of the native wolf species. The film follows a century of escalating attempts to eradicate the species as detailed by historian Dan Flores, *The New York Times* best-selling author of *Coyote America*.

“Coyotes are fission-fusion animals,” explains Dr. Flores in the film, meaning that they are one of only a few species that can function either within groups or as individuals. “Whenever they go into fission mode as a result of being persecuted, what they often end up doing is scattering across the landscape and colonizing new places. By wiping out wolves in Eastern America we had basically opened up the niche for a mid-sized canid predator. And when the attempt to poison coyotes in the West had triggered their fission-fusion reaction, coyotes had begun colonizing into the South and the East where this niche for a mid-sized predator remained open.”

Today an estimated 500,000 coyotes are slaughtered annually in the United States in the name of “wildlife management,” often through inhumane killing contests and practices such as leg hold traps, aerial shooting, and poisoning, according to Camilla Fox, Executive Director of advocacy organization Project Coyote. “Killing coyotes has never, and will never work to manage them,” states conservation biologist Chris Schadler, Co-Founder of the New Hampshire Wildlife Coalition, who recounts her years of successfully farming sheep amidst coyotes. The adverse effects of lethal control on the local level is explained by Dr. Mitchell of NBCS. “The alpha male and alpha female are the primary defenders of the pack territory. If you bring a hunter in and shoot coyotes, it’s basically shooting holes in the fence. If a resident bunch is shot out, it’s anarchy. All those coyotes start flowing into the void and you end up with more coyotes than you had to begin with,” says Dr. Mitchell. There is also a biological response to killing coyotes, she notes, as coyote litter sizes will increase to compensate.

According to the experts interviewed in the film, coyotes can bring many benefits to their communities, and there are evidence-based strategies for successful coexistence with coyotes. These include diligently eliminating human-provided food sources, hazing to reinforce fear of humans, and ensuring pets are kept on leashes, particularly during denning season.

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