



Newsletter

Spring 2025

From the MWC President

Another winter is about over in Maine's north woods. The ice is nearly out of the lakes and the snowdrifts are about gone. It will soon be time for us to get back up into the woods to reset trail cameras and look for scat. This is a time of excitement and anticipation of a new season and a rebirth after what was a more typical Maine winter.

Maine's wild canids are now giving birth to this year's crop of pups. Overnight, packs are doubling or tripling in size. It is simply nature's way that most pups will not live to see their first birthday, but Spring is a time for fun and excitement as they learn to navigate this great big world.

We're anxious to see how the adults we are monitoring with trail cameras fared through the winter and whether or not they have new pups. We are certainly heartened by our observations of some of the same adults over multiple years. This gives us a rough idea of adult mortality and what appears to be little or no hunting and trapping pressure in some, if not many areas. Their behaviors are interesting to watch with some running away at the sight of a camera and others curiously looking at it.

We encourage you to get out and enjoy Maine's woods and wildlife. Most Mainers I speak with have never been to the north woods or the western mountains. You don't know what you're missing. You might see a lynx,

moose or maybe even a wolf. Many of us take Maine for granted and don't realize how fortunate we are to live in such a special place. We are very fortunate.

Thank you all for your interest in, and support of wolf recovery in Maine. If you're up in the Northern Maine Woods, look for my white pickup with the white cap. Stay safe and take care!

Keep Howling,

John



A one-eyed Canis in Northern Maine.

**There are dark clouds on the horizon, but do
they have a silver lining?**

We try to start every newsletter on a positive note, but unfortunately, national events have generally not been favorable for wolf recovery. The wolf issue in Maine and across the nation is driven by politics. State legislatures and Congress enact the laws that state and federal agencies must administer. The agencies are part of the executive branch and take orders from the governor or president, but the agencies also have their own internal political agendas.

We can expect wolves in Maine and most of the country to once again be delisted, perhaps permanently. This is the direct result of the most recent presidential election. This is a tragedy for wolves, for the rule of law, and for our nation. Delisting will impact wolves and wolf recovery from Maine to California.

If federal legislation is passed as expected, across the U.S., states will have free rein to kill as many wolves as they want, and even to re-exterminate them. This is most concerning in states such as Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana, all of which have sizable wolf populations and all of which have a politically strong anti-wolf bias. With the federal government out of the picture, states will also have free rein to manage wolves as well or as poorly as they want. The political battlegrounds will be shifting to each individual state.

Here in Maine and the rest of the northeast, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection for wolves has meant little. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has effectively done nothing to recover or to protect them. As far as wolves in the northeast are concerned, the ESA is not worth the paper it is written on.

What is the future for wolves in the northeast, assuming they permanently lose ESA protection? Some good news is the fact that Canada is required

by law to develop a recovery plan for the Eastern wolf. This will likely mean more Eastern wolves in Ontario and Québec and more Eastern wolves to naturally disperse south into the U.S.

With the federal government out of the picture, we will push for the northeast states and Canada to work together on development and implementation of Canada's recovery plan. This is important because wolves will be moving back and forth across the U.S./Canadian border and the region will effectively have one wolf population.

The silver lining may well be that without the federal bureaucracy, states will also be able to take their own positive actions for wolf management. We know wolves are here. We know that the Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) has publicly stated that they expect to document a wolf pack (a breeding pair plus pups) within ten years, by 2034. We know that IFW is proposing to include the wolf in its 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need. That plan will be finalized later this year, and we strongly encourage you to comment on the Draft plan when the opportunity arises. On a state level, at least here in Maine, we are seeing what appears to be a positive shift, but we remain cautious and take nothing for granted.

As always, we will keep you posted.



A Canis during the Maine winter.

From the Biologist

The Way of the Coywolf – Part 1

By Jonathan G. Way

This edition explains the behavior and ecology of eastern coyotes, also called coywolf and northeastern *Canis*, in the wild. In this and in subsequent future articles, we will discuss five major findings of canid sociobiology, all of which are possible through the use of radio-telemetry:

- 1) home range and territoriality
- 2) sociality
- 3) activity patterns
- 4) den and rendezvous site behavior
- 5) movement patterns by both residents and transients

In this article, I will focus on #1: **home range and territoriality**.

Home range and territory are two closely related words. Home range is technically the area that an animal uses, while territory is the part of the home range that is guarded from others. Because wild canids are about as territorial as a species gets, most of their home range is also its territory. These areas can average [five to ten square miles in suburban areas](#) and [fifteen to twenty in more rural areas like northern Maine and southeastern Canada](#). On Cape Cod, MA, I've consistently observed them use large areas of around 8-10 square miles. This means that one canid family can claim a large amount of real estate. It also means that there are a lot fewer coyotes than most people think.

With regard to coyote populations, it might seem reasonable that killing them can reduce their numbers. But this is actually not as straightforward as one may think. Research has found that adults actively guard the perimeter of their exclusive domains. I have personally witnessed a couple of instances where an [average size territory was later subdivided into two different territories](#) following the death of the former controlling breeding male. In both new territories, the pack sizes were the same as the previous male's one family. The only thing different was that each new pack used a smaller territory, and thus the species lived at a higher density in that area.

A new logical view is that leaving wild canines alone, by not hunting and trapping them, can actually cause their numbers to stabilize or even decrease in an area where all available habitat is saturated by territorial groups. The reasoning behind this is that older, well-established individuals effectively guard considerably larger areas from other packs, and young animals learn pretty quickly that the area is occupied and to stay away. This territorialism precludes the need for people to try to manage or kill them to reduce numbers, unless there are specific individuals causing problems. It is important to recognize that a “problem animal” is a human defined term that can vary by person. For instance, most would agree that a coyote approaching or biting people is an issue that has to be dealt with, but one coming into neighborhoods at night eating free-roaming house cats would be a nuisance for some but just Mother Nature doing her thing for others.

Just how do they guard these territories? There are three main ways this occurs. The first and the loudest, is howling. Canids howl to communicate with their family (e.g., “I’m over here, where are you?”), rally the pack, probably for the simple joy of it (why do people sing?), and to warn others of their kind that “we are here and don’t think about coming over.”

When howling, groups often sound like many more animals than there actually are. In other words, just a few animals can sound like ten because they change their intonation, pitch, and even volume while howling. People from rural areas of New York, New Hampshire, and urban areas of southern New England often email me that they hear ‘huge packs’ of coywolves howling at night, when in reality it is likely a standard group size of three to five animals.

Coyotes also scent-mark to warn other animals of their presence. Canids often deposit their urine and scat (poop) more often at the perimeter of their territory where it produces a higher encounter rate of trespassers, giving fair warning of their presence. Males may also raise-leg urinate (RLU) over prominent objects like a stump or raised patch of dirt, while females flex-leg urinate (FLU) in a similar manner. They tend to mark, with both urine and scat, around the junction of trails they use to maximize the chances of being detected by other wild canids. This is useful for biologists studying

food contents, as finding their scat is certainly easier at these locations than in random spots in the woods.

A by-product of marking behavior can be seen with domestic dogs, who often urinate on a telephone pole. In this scenario, it seems to be a modified but instinctive scent-marking technique where most domesticated canines are doing it more to communicate with each other rather than guarding an area from rivals. In either case, given the remarkable ability of a canid's nose, it is likely that they can recognize each other as individuals, which probably facilitates the designation of mutual boundaries between packs.

Finally, if howling and scent-marking do not work, then direct confrontations surely elicit territorial pack behavior. This can range from chasing a trespasser to outright killing it. I even suspect that some lone transients without pack affiliations generally hunt and travel by day – and this could explain daytime sightings of healthy animals – to avoid family groups that hunt and travel by night. Although same species killing does not often occur with coywolves ([but see here](#)) and [eastern wolves](#), it is actually the [most frequent cause of death for gray wolves in protected areas](#) like Yellowstone and Alaskan national parks.

An example of territoriality can be found on my website's 18 February 2008 Field Update entitled [Battle in the Suburbs](#). Here I witnessed two radio-collared packs confronting each other at night on Cape Cod. Both groups had a radio-collared breeding female. One of them was traveling with her mate while the other was in a pack of four. Both were at the mutual borders of their adjacent territories along the western shore of Lake Wequaquet, which divided the Centerville and Hyannis Packs. It was chaos as I was picking up both signals strongly in the same area. All of a sudden, I saw the shadow of the female from the Centerville pack as she flew across a road with her mate, heading west back into the heart of her territory. Seconds later the other breeding female and her mate, followed by two associates, crossed the same stretch of road following them with their tails very high – a sign of confidence. They were scenting the pavement and could certainly smell the rival pair as they chased them. I was in my

vehicle using night-vision optics to watch them in the dark so I had to really focus to follow them.

About two minutes later, the more dominant Hyannis pack re-crossed the road back to the east as if comfortable that the rival group had departed. Then about five minutes afterward they erupted into a loud group howl. They were clearly using all of this energy in the dead of winter to stake claim to that area. As I continued to track the signals of the two collared animals, they were miles apart just an hour later. This anecdote further illustrates that leaving older territorial canids alone can actually maintain populations at a stable number as they are downright determined to keep non-pack members off their turf!

In this section, we learned a lot about eastern coyote ecology and how they naturally have large home ranges and territories which keeps their populations lower than most people would suspect. In the next edition, we are going to learn about the pack and social dynamics of the animals that live within these territories.

For more on home range and territoriality, please visit these resources which includes a record pack density because of a very small territory size; a double litter following the death of a resident male, and the near doubling of a local area canid population following the death of a different male coywolf:

[Way, J.G., and B. Timm. 2011. Record Pack-density of Eastern Coyotes/Coywolves \(*Canis latrans x lycaon*\). American Midland Naturalist 165\(1\):201-203.](#)

[Way, J.G. 2010. Double-litters in Coywolf \(*Canis latrans x lycaon*\) Packs Following the Death or Disappearance of a Resident Territorial Male. Canadian Field Naturalist 124\(3\): 256-257.](#)

[Way, J. G., B. C. Timm, and E. G. Strauss. 2009. Coywolf \(*Canis latrans x lycaon*\) Pack Density Doubles Following the Death of a Resident Territorial Male. Canadian Field Naturalist 123\(3\): 199-205.](#)

[Way, J. G., I. M. Ortega, and P. J. Auger. 2002. Eastern coyote home range, territoriality and sociality on urbanized Cape Cod. *Northeast Wildlife* 57: 1-18.](#)

The text is an adaptation of excerpts of Way's book
[Coywolf: Eastern Coyote Genetics, Ecology, Management, and Politics](#)
which can be downloaded here:
<https://www.easterncoyoteresearch.com/coywolfbook/>.



Coywolves ranging from gray to golden in Maine (all four photos).

Coywolf pup (upper right).

Maine Wolf Coalition Winter Efforts

Winter in Maine is a difficult time to search for eastern wolves and their recent hybrids. Our efforts slow down tremendously, but they do not stop. Despite the very cold temperatures, shorter daylight hours and massive amounts of snow, we do continue placing and maintaining camera sites. It's certainly much more difficult and we don't reap the results we see at other times of the year, but it is productive.

Mobility during the winter can be a challenge. However, with tracked vehicles such as snowmobiles and a tracked Polaris Ranger we do manage to visit sites that are within a certain distance of plowed logging roads. This past winter our travel range was very limited in the very northern part of Maine, even with the tracked Ranger – the snow fall in areas was so deep the vehicle was sinking into the snow too far, making it very difficult to travel more than a short distance. Travel to camera sites in the Western Mountains is even more limited due to snow depths and hazardous weather which can blow in unexpectedly making travel in these regions dangerous. The use of tracked vehicles also does not deposit us at the camera site. In most circumstances, we will still have to hike in from the trail or road to the actual camera location, and that trek can be quite long and arduous in snowshoes depending on snow depths. Plus, we must carry in our gear and possibly bait as well. When we have accomplished all these things, we feel our efforts have been successful! Because of these challenges, only a few of our cameras are accessible during the Winter months and the frequency of our visits has significantly decreased to about 1 -2 time(s) from December to May.

During the Winter our pictures and video footage occurs mostly after dark (about 90%). The much shorter daylight hours result in a reduced amount of time to capture daylight pictures of wildlife. We do get lucky and occasionally capture amazing images of a *Canis* in full winter pelage which is always a wonderful surprise since these animals can look very different

in the winter. Observing video footage of *Canis* during the winter also provides us with important information on the behavior of these creatures during this difficult time of the year.

Winter in Maine does come to an end around the middle of April. However, after the snow melts, there's an additional wait of 4 – 6 weeks for mud season to end before setting out to check our sites. For this brief period, we literally cease visiting our sites until everything dries out. The risk of getting stuck is too great and most trails in Maine are closed until the middle of May. Soon we will be back out to all our locations and will have the pleasure of viewing the activity that has occurred at our most remote locations over the past 6 months.



A pair of coywolves.

Potpourri

Here's a new column about some of the many things that are happening. We've combined them together for your reading pleasure.

- On April 26, 2025, John Glowa gave a wolf powerpoint presentation at the [Center for Wildlife](#) in York. We thank them for the invitation and the opportunity to educate folks about wolves and wolf recovery in the northeast.
- We have been approved once again to participate in the [Common Ground Fair](#). This will be our 30th consecutive appearance at the fair. The 2025 Common Ground Country Fair will be held at the Common Ground Education Center in Unity, Maine on September 19, 20, and 21, 2025. We look forward to seeing you there!
- We are still waiting for the DNA results from Michigan Technological University. We recently sent duplicates of most of the MTU samples plus some new samples to the University of Québec in Outaouais for analysis. The Québec samples are part of a graduate student's research into the DNA and diets of Canadian and northeast U.S. canids. Learning what Maine's large canids have been eating during the warm weather months in addition to DNA identification of the animals will be a bonus. Researchers in Minnesota with the [Voyageurs Wolf Project](#) are learning that wolves are eating wild berries such as blueberries and raspberries when available. The summer months are the most difficult for wolf families as prey become more difficult to catch and as growing pups demand more food. Late summer and into fall is when the most starvation occurs.
- We have been invited to give a presentation at [Wolf Hollow](#) in Ipswich, Massachusetts. No date has been set but it looks like it will happen in September for their 35th anniversary celebration. We want to thank them for thirty-five years of helping the public to understand wolves and their importance in the ecosystem.



Photos taken in Northern Maine.



Winter/Spring 2024/25 Photo Gallery:





**For more information, please visit the
following Maine Wolf Coalition sites:**

[The Maine Wolf Coalition Website](#)

[The MWC Facebook Page](#)

[The MWC Substack Page](#)

[The MWC YouTube Channel](#)

The Maine Wolf Coalition, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit corporation dedicated to wolf recovery in Maine through research, education, and protection.

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