

Coyote Chronicles



PROJECTCOYOTE.ORG | WINTER 2024

**Victory in New York:
Wildlife Killing
Contests Banned!**

**Wolf Advocacy
Across the Country**

**Reforming USDA
Wildlife Services
Program to Protect
Wild Lives**

Mark Surls
#CaptureCoexistence Contributor



NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This winter has been one of our busiest yet. Although our work to protect North America's most persecuted carnivores can be disheartening at times, we finished the year with tremendous hope.

With just moments left in 2023 to make a decision, Governor Hochul signed legislation to ban wildlife killing contests statewide in New York, making it the 10th state to end this egregious bloodsport. We commend Governor Hochul for this decision and are so grateful to our coalition allies and wildlife advocates across the state for their steadfast advocacy to protect wild lives from these contests. In the last months of the year, we also submitted a petition with coalition allies for rulemaking to USDA Wildlife Services to phase out inhumane killing methods of wild animals. While our advocacy for Canyon's Law to ban the use of M-44 'cyanide bombs' on public lands continues, we welcomed the Bureau of Land Management's decision to end the use of these devices on BLM land. These steps toward a more compassionate world for wild lives, along with many others detailed in this *Coyote Chronicles* issue, provide strong momentum for our ambitious 2024 goals.

In addition to our programmatic work, this winter has illuminated the inspiring nature of our community. We were granted a \$100K Matching Gift for the second year in a row thanks to the generosity of several long term supporters. And for the second year, our community rallied behind this effort. Thanks to wildlife advocates across the country, these critical funds were fully unlocked and our year-end goal was significantly exceeded in the last hours of the year. We are humbled by this outpouring of support.

Lastly, our team continues to grow with the addition of two new staff. Please join me in welcoming Kristen, our new Public Engagement Coordinator, and Cassidy, our new Development Operations Coordinator, to the Project Coyote pack!

I hope you'll enjoy this winter edition of *Coyote Chronicles* — and share with anyone who you think might find our work for wildlife of interest.

Wishing you and the Wild Ones a compassionate and peaceful new year,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Camilla".

Camilla Fox
Founder & Executive Director

Seasonal Coexistence Tip

If you've been seeing or hearing more coyotes lately, there's a good reason—it's breeding season! Late January through early March is mating season for coyotes and they become more active during this time. Coyotes are territorial animals that live alone, in pairs, or in family groups known as packs. They are generally monogamous, forming strong pair bonds that can last a lifetime. During the mating season, they become very active in marking and vocalizing to defend their territories, protect their pack, and successfully raise pups in the spring. Contrary to what many people think, when you hear a series of yips and howls at night—or even during the day—it's likely not a pack of coyotes on the hunt, but rather packs staking out their territories or calling to family members.

With approximately a dozen different vocalizations, it is common to mistake a few coyotes communicating with each other for a large group due to their deployment of the 'beau geste effect', by which coyotes create the auditory illusion of being more numerous through the use of a variety of sounds and pitches. In a [2017 study on human perception of coyote group size](#), participants who listened to recordings of one to four coyotes vocalizing consistently overestimated the number of coyotes by a factor of two.

Coyotes in general do not pose a threat to humans — and they prefer that we keep our distance. If they feel we're too close, especially if a dog is present, they might use alarm barks to ask us to go away. In such cases, remain calm and leave the area, as they could be protecting a den and their families. If a coyote comes too close, you may humanely haze them by making yourself big and loud (see our [hazing guide](#)). Additionally, practicing responsible pet ownership is essential to ensure the safety of both companion animals and wildlife. With a bit of diligence and planning, we can learn to coexist with these incredibly smart, adaptable 'song dogs'—and enjoy their haunting wintertime howls. [Learn more about coyotes](#) and [download free resources](#) for peaceful coexistence on our website.

Photo by Mark Surls #CaptureCoexistence Contributor



Victory!

New York Bans Wildlife Killing Contests

On December 22nd, Governor Kathy Hochul [signed critical legislation](#) to end wildlife killing contests, making New York the 10th state to stop the slaughter of wild animals for cash and prizes.

Legislation S.4099/A.2917 amends New York's environmental conservation law to make competitive events where contestants compete to kill the most, the heaviest and the smallest animals for prizes and entertainment, unlawful. Commonly targeted species in these events include coyotes, foxes, bobcats, squirrels, raccoons, and crows. The bill was supported by leading animal protection and conservation groups and by thousands of New Yorkers. Hunters, farmers, veterinarians and wildlife rehabilitators also backed the legislation.

Project Coyote co-founded the [Coalition to End Wildlife Killing Contests](#) with the Humane Society

of the United States, which now includes more than 60 national and state organizations working together to end this barbaric practice nationwide through federal, state and local bans. As public attitudes shift and increasing scientific understanding of wildlife dynamics continues to develop, advocates, state agencies, and legislatures around the country are moving quickly to end these contests.

The legislation "marks a monumental and long-awaited victory for New York's wildlife, who have been subjected for far too long to being wastefully killed for cash and other prizes," said Renee Seacor, Carnivore Conservation Director for Project Coyote. "We applaud Governor Hochul for signing this critical legislation into law, making New York the tenth state to join the growing list of states rightfully putting an end to these cruel and senseless contests."

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Renee Seacor,
Carnivore Conservation Director

Wolf Advocacy Across the Country



Photo ©Sarah Killingsworth

Wolves have been making headlines across the country in recent months. From successful reintroductions to conflict management with ranchers, the Project Coyote pack has been busy working on our Protect America's Wolves campaign.

In California, we continue to celebrate the strong recovery of wolves across the state. As of today, there are now [eight known wolf packs](#) residing as far south as Tulare County. The natural return of wolves to the region after their nearly century-long absence is a significant conservation milestone that deserves continued celebration—as well as continued work to ensure human tolerance and acceptance of the gray wolf's full recovery in the Golden State!

In Colorado, [ten wolves were recently released](#) into the state following a voter-led ballot measure that passed in 2020. The reintroduction continues to raise many biological and ethical questions about our right to intervene in the wild lives of other sentient beings. We've [raised some of these concerns](#) along with our [Science & Ethics Advisory Board member Dr. Marc Bekoff](#) over the complexities and risks of intervening with wild lives that may be harmed by, and harm, others. In preparation for the reintroduction, we [advocated for the strongest protections](#) for Colorado's wolves, and now that wolves are on the ground, our duty to coexist is stronger than ever. Coexistence in the coming months will necessitate continuous improvement, education, and behavior modification as Coloradans learn to once again share their landscape with wolves.

In Montana and across the Northern Rockies, wolves continue to face unethical and egregious slaughter. In

November 2022, [we filed a lawsuit](#) against the State of Montana over their aggressive hunting and trapping policies, and despite countless attempts by the state to dismiss the case, our lifesaving litigation in defense of wolves persists. Last month, we submitted comments and [engaged our supporters in commenting](#) on Montana's draft wolf management plan, underscoring the plan's failure to adequately consider the economic and ecosystem-wide benefits provided by a thriving wolf population, as well as the harms that will result from the state's continued aggressive killing policies.

Our advocacy also extends to the Northeast, where we work to secure strong protections for all canids in support of wolf recovery efforts. A newly introduced bill ([S.7927/A.8295](#)) in New York provides an opportunity to mandate the reporting of canids killed by hunters and trappers. It also would require the collection of genetic data from large canids killed to monitor for wolf presence and help gather important information on the canid populations in the state.

On a national level, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) [announced](#) its intention to publish a proposed rule regarding the listing status of gray wolves in the lower 48 by February 2, 2024. We plan to inform and engage our supporters on this newly proposed rule once it's released. USFWS also recently [agreed to draft a new national recovery plan](#) for gray wolves pursuant to a settlement agreement reached (outside of the Northern Rockies where wolves will remain federally delisted). The settlement requires the draft plan to be completed within two years unless the agency finds that such a plan "will not promote the conservation of the species."

Reforming the USDA Wildlife Services Program to Protect Wild Lives

Project Coyote is dedicated to ending the indiscriminate and inhumane killing practices of the federal U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Wildlife Services (WS) program, and welcomed a [recent decision](#) by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to end the use of M-44 devices — known as cyanide bombs — on 245 million acres of BLM land. According to the USDA, M-44s were used by WS to intentionally kill more than 88,000 animals from 2014–2022.

Project Coyote, alongside coalition allies, also [submitted a petition](#) for rulemaking to USDA WS urging the agency to phase out unnecessary, ecologically damaging, and inhumane methods of killing wild animals. This would include prohibiting specific cruel and indiscriminate methods, such as neck snares, M-44 cyanide bombs, lead ammunition, and more; and ban WS operations in wilderness areas. The petitioners further request clear standards to ensure Wildlife Services treats animals humanely and operates with greater transparency and accountability to the public.

Wildlife Services traps, snares, poisons, and shoots millions of animals every year in the U.S., primarily on behalf of the animal agriculture industry, as well as pro-hunting interests. Between 2010 and 2022, the program killed over 37.4 million native animals, including coyotes, foxes, mountain lions, bears, beavers, and many species of birds. Wildlife Services also unintentionally kills non-target animals, including companion animals and imperiled species, such as eagles, falcons, condors, wolves, grizzly bears, and many more. Killing such a large number of animals has contributed to the local extinction of many North American species, and has fundamentally altered ecosystems at the local, regional, and continental levels.

“The USDA Wildlife Services program has failed to integrate the best available science and shifting public attitudes toward wildlife; instead they continue to emphasize lethal, cruel and often indiscriminate killing methods for addressing livestock-wildlife conflicts,” says Camilla Fox, founder and executive director of Project Coyote. “This federal agency has an opportunity — and a public duty — to bring its program into the 21st century by shifting its focus to humane, ecologically sound, science-based nonlethal conflict mitigation policies and practices.”

Photo by Larry Taylor #CaptureCoexistence Contributor





Movement Building to Protect Wildlife in Vermont

It's an exciting time for wildlife in Vermont as [four bills on the table](#) in the legislature may increase protections for the state's ecosystems and the wildlife, humans and companion animals who share them:

- H.323, a bill to ban hound hunting of coyotes and bears
- S.111 and H.191, Vermont senate and house bills to ban trapping of furbearing wildlife except for property or agricultural nuisance reasons, and only by licensed trappers
- S.258, a Vermont senate bill to transfer rulemaking authority from the unelected Board of Vermont Fish & Wildlife to the Department of Fish & Wildlife, to require more diversity of approach and science-based training among members of the Board of Fish & Wildlife which would provide advisory input instead of its current rulemaking authority, and to ban hound hunting of coyotes and the use of bait to attract coyotes.

Wildlife advocates have collaborated since 2021 to move these issues forward, including Project Coyote representatives (Carnivore Conservation Director Renee Seacor, Vermont Representative and Multimedia Associate Sarah Gorsline, New Hampshire Representative and wild canid biologist Chris Schadler) numerous organizations (including Protect Our Wildlife, Animal Wellness Action, Vermont Coyote Coexistence Coalition, Green Mountain Animal Defenders, Vermont Wildlife Patrol), Vermont Wildlife Coalition, Vermont Law School alumni and students, and concerned citizens.

Current trapping and hound hunting policies in Vermont have led to numerous injuries and deaths of domestic and wild lives, and have even caused conflicts with Vermont residents and landowners such as incidences of hunting hounds injuring hikers and their companion animals. In 2022, the Board of Fish & Wildlife was tasked with several legislative mandates to improve animal welfare related to trapping, to make coyote hound hunting "more humane," and to prevent trespassing of hunting hounds on posted no-hunting properties.

Unfortunately, the Board ignored the input of wildlife advocates who participated in a working group process. In a state where 68% of residents oppose recreational trapping, according to a survey by Vermont Fish & Wildlife, the [Board's policies are out of step with public concern](#).

Between October to December of 2023, a group of Vermont wildlife advocates, including Project Coyote representative Sarah Gorsline, testified before the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR) and observed meetings of this committee as they discussed the proposed rules. After considering all testimony, in an extremely rare move, the [LCAR officially registered 4 objections](#) to the Board of Fish & Wildlife's new trapping and coyote hound hunting rules, which shifts the burden of proof to the Board to defend these policies if they are sued by a citizen or wildlife advocacy group over the rules.

In 2024, Project Coyote representatives will continue building relationships with Vermont legislators and community members to work toward more humane, scientifically-informed policies.

Film Launch: Ecosystem Allies

Project Coyote is thrilled to release a new short film, [Ecosystem Allies: Large Carnivores and How They Benefit Us All](#). The film describes the many ecological benefits provided by wolves, bears, mountain lions, and coyotes—from regulating grazing animal populations to boosting plant biodiversity. Special thanks to The Schwemm Family Foundation and The Volgenau Foundation for their generous support and to Peter Coyote, Project Coyote Advisory Board Member, for his narration and Sarah Gorsline, Project Coyote’s multimedia associate, and all of our contributors for putting together this incredible video! [Watch now.](#)



Growing Our Pack



Kristen Weiss,
Public Engagement Coordinator

We are pleased to introduce [Kristen Weiss](#) as Project Coyote's new Public Engagement Coordinator. In this role, Kristen will help strengthen Project Coyote's relationships with the public, volunteers, and community. With a background in ecological management and science communication, Kristen believes strongly in the combined powers of good science and engaging storytelling to catalyze conservation and sustainability efforts. She has a B.S. in Conservation & Resource Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and a PhD in wildlife management from James Cook University in Queensland, Australia. Her lifelong love of animals motivates Kristen to volunteer with rescue horses and wildlife rescue centers, and pet-sit whenever possible! She loves traveling, hiking, and cuddling with her adventurous little chihuahua rescue, Buttercup the Eco Pup.



Cassidy Zehnder,
Development Operations Coordinator

We are also thrilled to welcome [Cassidy Zehnder](#) as our Development & Operations Coordinator. Cassidy will maintain Project Coyote's database and assist with communication efforts to grow our community of supporters. She has a professional background in the economic justice sector plus a wealth of volunteer experience with animal advocacy organizations. She has a B.A. in Spanish Studies and an M.A. in Philanthropic Studies from the IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. Cassidy grew up in a family that valued a connection to nature, from visiting animal sanctuaries to hiking in the Smoky Mountains. In her free time, Cassidy can be found volunteering with community cats, doing Doggy Days Out at local shelters, reading, trying new restaurants, hiking, cuddling her pets, spending time with friends and family, playing Dungeons & Dragons, or planning her next trip to Latin America.



We Surpassed our 2023 Fundraising Goal!

We're thrilled to announce that we met and exceeded our year end matching gift campaign – unlocking an extra \$100K for wild carnivores! Whether you contributed, shared our emails, or engaged with our social media posts, you made a difference. Thanks to this success, we are diving into another year with ambitious goals to advocate for our beleaguered, yet ecologically vital wild carnivores in legislatures and courtrooms, and to promote compassionate coexistence in communities and classrooms across the country. This year has so much in store, and we look forward to keeping you informed about our work for wildlife and how you can continue advocating on their behalf. Thank you all for your unwavering dedication to our shared vision of a North America where humans and wild carnivores coexist and ecosystems thrive.



Share a Pawsome e-Card this Valentines

It's coyote mating season, and love is in the air (along with some extra howls)! Did you know that [adult coyotes often form long-term monogamous bonds](#) with their mates? In honor of these amazing animals and their carnivore cousins, Project Coyote has created a series of Valentine's Day e-cards featuring beautiful wildlife images and Valentine's messages. For a small donation, you can share a Valentine's e-card with friends, family, and loved ones—and support carnivore conservation efforts at the same time! [Check out our cards and choose your favorite.](#)



Meet Sarah Killingsworth

Project Coyote pack member [Sarah Killingsworth](#), an award-winning wildlife conservation photographer and filmmaker as well as an attorney and mediator, has been a strong voice for wildlife in Northern California for years. Sarah has been an active volunteer for Project Coyote, including as the Youth Education & Outreach Program Coordinator for our [Keeping It Wild program](#), which engages young people in carnivore conservation and fosters awareness, knowledge and respect for nature, wildlife, and biodiversity. We are grateful for Sarah's continued dedication and leadership.

Sarah recently produced a short film, *A Wilderness Desecrated*, for the California Coastal Commission highlighting the negative environmental impacts of cattle ranching in Point Reyes National Seashore ([watch here](#)). Manure from these operations contaminates waterways and negatively impacts an ecosystem which is home to an array of wildlife, from elephant seals to peregrine falcons, from bobcats to western snowy plovers.

"Over the years, I became increasingly aware of environmental issues in Point Reyes National Seashore," says Sarah. "Point Reyes is a stunning place, with dramatic cliffs, beautiful beaches, Bishop pine forests, and sweeping coastal prairies. As part of our National Park system, the lands, air and water in Point Reyes National Seashore should be some of the most protected in the country. All the creeks, lagoons, beaches, and esteros in the park should be healthy ecosystems and have water that is safe for recreational contact, but currently that's not the case."

Sarah's first film, [Polluted Waters](#), followed the water quality sampling efforts of a group of citizen scientists that documented significant e. coli and coliform contamination in waterways at Point Reyes. Her most recent film features a source of that contamination – the spreading and spraying of cattle manure across park lands.

Says Sarah, "I love spending time with wildlife in Point Reyes and advocating for healthy ecosystems. Observing and photographing wildlife and wild places there brings me so much joy. It is my priority to protect this special place for future generations."

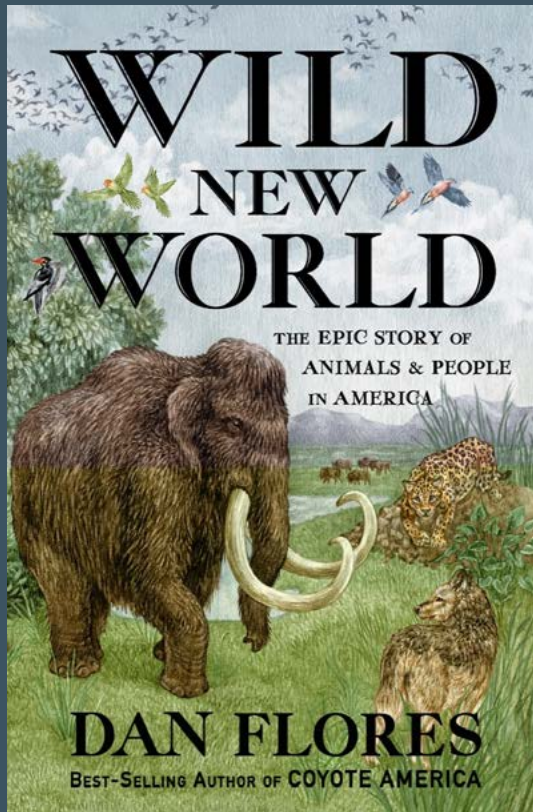
To learn more about Sarah and her connection to Point Reyes National seashore, visit her [website](#) and follow her on [Instagram](#).



Photo by Melissa Groo,
a PC Ambassador



Publications, Presentations, Press, & Webinars



Featured publication: Dan Flores' New Book "Wild New World" Receives Rachel Carson Environmental Book Award

Project Coyote Ambassador Dan Flores' new book *"Wild New World: The Epic Story of Animals & People in America"* was recently awarded the Rachel Carson Environmental Book Award by the Society of Environmental Journalists. The judges commented "Flores weaves a mesmerizing natural history of the New World, using genomics and evolutionary biology to trace the decline of animal species from the advent of weapon-use by the Clovis people some 13,000 years ago – after which most of the continent's large mammals vanished – to today's Sixth Extinction. While lamenting the staggering loss of evolutionary richness unleashed by our species' self-denial about our animal nature, *"Wild New World"* celebrates what was, and reminds us to experience and honor what remains." Dan's book was also a short-list finalist for the Ralph Waldo Emerson book prize from Phi Beta Kappa and the winner will be announced next month. We are so appreciative of Dan's literary genius, his support of wild nature, and his contributions toward our shared vision of compassionate carnivore coexistence. For an engaging discussion with Dan about *"Wild New World"* and select readings from the text, [check out our December 1, 2023 webinar.](#)

Additional Publications, Presentations, & Press:



[JOHN MAGURANIS](#)

Canid Thoughts podcast.
Episode: [Humans, Wildlife, and Animal Control](#).
Nov 11, 2023.



[CHRIS SCHADLER](#)

“Becoming Wolf: Eastern Coyote in New Hampshire”

Oct 4, 2023, Londonderry Conservation Commission
Oct 11, 2023, Concord Public Library
Oct 12, 2023, Hampton Public Library
Oct 24, 2023, Barrington Public Library
Oct 29, 2023, Salisbury Friends of the Library
Nov 1, 2023, Belmont Public Library
Nov 2, 2023, Dunbarton Public Library

“Coyotes in New England”

Oct 18, 2023, Friendship Group of the Gilford Community Church

“The Return of the Wolf: Are we ready for wolf recovery in NH?”

Oct 19, 2023, Gilford Public Library



[RENEE SEACOR](#)

The Missing Stone: A Conversation About Conservation.
Episode: [Compassionate Conservation with Renee Seacor](#).
Dec. 13, 2023



[KELLY BORGMANN](#)

The Missing Stone: A Conversation About Conservation.
Episode: [Carnivore Coexistence with Kelly Borgmann](#).
Dec. 6, 2023



[FRANSICO SANTIAGO-AVILA](#)

[Wisconsin’s Wolf Management Plan: How to Make your Voice Heard. Webinar.](#)
Oct. 17, 2023.



[IANE MCBRIDE](#)

Wildlife Killing Contests in the Prairie State.
Hosted by the Piasa Palisades Group of the Sierra Club.
Oct. 10, 2023.

Recent Blog Posts & Webinars:



NOTES FROM THE FIELD:

[WITNESSING WOLVES: THE FIGHT FOR THEIR FUTURE IN MONTANA](#)

by Renee Seacor, January 19, 2024



NOTES FROM THE FIELD:

[INTERVIEW WITH WILDLIFE ADVOCATE & PHOTOGRAPHER MARK SURLS](#)

October 25, 2023



NOTES FROM THE FIELD:

[A JOURNEY TO COEXISTENCE BY LINDSAY HOPPESTAD](#)

October 10, 2023



WEBINAR:

[CULTIVATING COMPASSION FOR COYOTES WITH LILY & BARBARA KINGSOLVER](#)

November 17, 2023



Scan to grow our
impact in 2024
and beyond.



Protecting Wild Carnivores,
Fostering Thriving Ecosystems

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