The Coyote Hunt

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protest the hunt while protecting the poor, little coyotes, etc, etc, ad infin-nauseam.

Taylor didn't buckle under the pressure. Instead, he invited the protestors to come and demonstrate. They would be welcome to come, he said. After all, they would have to rent motel rooms, buy meals and spend money in Campbell County. Economics was part of the decision to have the hunt in the first place.

The Mayor of Gillette, Edd Collins, was flooded with phone calls and letters denouncing the hunt. For whatever reason, animal rights folks targeted Collins, who had absolutely no control over the hunt, with their cards, letters and phone calls.

Most letters were filled with the usual animal rights propaganda: The "pampered, lazy, greedy" ranchers should "fence the coyotes out, use strobe and siren devices, buy guard dogs, llamas" etc. etc. Further, coyotes "didn't eat livestock, only mice and rats." Coyote predation figures were "inflated and there's no proof coyotes are a problem."

Some comments bordered on the bizarre. One wrote: "Psychiatrists agree that people who shoot animals would really rather be killing other humans." Now, that's a new one.

Another letter was downright threatening: "I am planning on attending your upcoming coyote and fox shoot... I am a lousy shot and therefore wish to warn you officials at the county and city that it may not be safe on Feb. 4-6 for you to be outside. Afterall, a scoped, 30-30 bullet can travel miles. Who knows, the official count may indeed be an official count!! Signed: An excited tourist who may make your day."

Mayor Collins was extremely patient with callers. However, after hearing the same comments over and over, he decided to play a little joke on one of the callers.

The caller said she was from New Jersey and simply could not understand how the Mayor could sit idly by and let this coyote slaughter go on. He must do something to stop this hunt, she said.

With a smile, Collins asked the lady how much she knew about Campbell County? She admitted she didn't know much and certainly wasn't going to visit any time soon. Collins asked her if she was aware of what the coyotes had done to the camels in Campbell County? She did not.

Then Collins went on to explain that the Campbell County High School mascot was the camel (It's true, they're called the Gillette Camels) and the reason the mascot was chosen was because there used to be camels throughout Campbell County, Wyoming (Not true, the only living camels ever seen in Campbell County came with the circus and left with it).

The lady asked where the camels came from? Collins, striving to keep a straight face and calm voice on the phone, said the camels were brought West with the U.S. Calvary during the Indian Wars. Some had gotten loose and ran wild and had lived in Campbell County ever since.

Now, said Collins, the coyotes had killed off nearly all the camels. And the local high school students were distraught over losing their mascot to coyotes. They had brought in counselors for the kids to deal with the emotional stress and nothing seemed to work. And so they were having a coyote hunt in hopes of saving the last remaining camels in Campbell County for the high school kids.

Sympathetically, the lady then stated she understood the problem and could see why they were having the coyote hunt.

Funny as that actual story is, it identifies the real problem facing our wildlife today — no first hand knowledge of the real world. This void allows for people and groups, highly trained at pulling a person's emotional heart strings, to indoctrinate folks with a "supposed" problem, i.e. coyote slaughter ("massacre" was also used) in Campbell County, and then give a solution, i.e. "Give us money and we'll stop those awful killers."

The results of the negative publicity campaign was the best advertising the Campbell County Chamber of Commerce could ask for. Hunters from across the state and neighboring states called to sign up and pay the $25 application fee. In two weeks time, the hunt was full.

The Chamber had planned to take in 200 hunters and place them with cooperating ranchers who were suffering domestic livestock losses. By mid-January, the 200th hunter had paid his dues thanks to the publicity given the hunt by the animal rightists. Taylor felt they could have doubled the hunter numbers if they had ranches on which they could hunt.

Then opposition to the coyote hunt came from another source — the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WYG&F). Not local resident field biologist Oedekoven, for he clearly understood the predation problem. It came from WYG&F's headquarters down in Cheyenne, the state capital.

WYG&F, like so many game departments in other states, has tried to walk the fence between the real conservationists, i.e. ranchers, farmers, hunters, trappers and fishermen, and the environmental/animal rights folks. The main reason the conservationists haven't been totally abandoned already is because WYG&F's income comes directly from these people. Eliminate hunting, fishing and trapping and 75% of their income is gone. Only $140,000 of a $32 million dollar budget comes from the non-consumptive users — those who prefer to watch wildlife and shoot it with a camera. $140,000. That's it.

(Please understand we are all for the non-consumers taking pictures of wildlife, buying T-Shirts and other promotional items. What bothers us is there is a minority of these non-consumers who have made it their goal to ban hunting, fishing and trapping. Without hunting, fishing and trapping, there's no effective management. No effective management means we go back to the 40 year cycles of feast and famine, now affectionately referred to as "balance of nature," meaning there would be many years where there would be little or no wildlife to see or enjoy. Only management by man provides such a luxury.)

The bottom line here is: wildlife consumers, i.e. hunters, trappers and fishermen are the ones who finance wildlife management. Ranchers and farmers, at no charge to the public, provide most of the habitat for wild game. And, in many instances, it costs them dearly, i.e. crop and nuisance damage, to provide such habitat. But still they do it. Why? Because they like seeing the animals around.

Non-consumers are along for the ride. The things they enjoy are given to them on a silver platter and they don't even realize it! Instead, quite often, they work or contribute to those organizations intent on putting the consumers and habitat providers out of business.

If it wasn't for the money, WYG&F would dump consumers in a minute. No, they won't tell you that, but their actions say so.

So, while the resident WYG&F biologist was saying predators were a problem, we had the WYG&F Director, Pete Petera, making statements that the hunt was "bad publicity."

The problem with the WYG&F can be illustrated in a story AWS Founder Dick Mader often tells: Suppose you go to the airport and approach an airline ticket agent to purchase a ticket to fly somewhere. The agent informs you that your flight has a new pilot. He's read all available books on flying, he's taken a college course on flying and he made a perfect score on the written exam. However, he has never actually flown a plane until now. The flight you're taking is his first. Would you buy the ticket? No way! Why? Because he has no actual flying experience.

The same is true of game and fish departments across this nation. They've read all the books, they've taken college courses, they've passed all the examinations, but they have no actual game management experience. And, until they get such experience, they simply cannot do the job properly.

A postcard sent to Mayor Collins illustrates this perfectly: "As a wildlife biology student I have been assured by experts that the numbers of predation turned in by ranchers are inflated and unvalidated, besides which the coyotes main diet is small rodents..."

The WYG&F has many biologists and game managers, i.e. "experts." They all have college degrees as far as we know, but the vast majority have little or no actual field experience. Their knowledge is from a book or a college lecture. Without actual hands-on experience, they're often "shooting in the dark." As one Alaska Fish and Game Department Biologist told this writer, "It all fits together so neatly in the classroom, but the real world is an entirely different scenario. I had to completely relearn many things once I got out in the field."

While the college text may say that all animals have their place in nature. The real world tells us predators have to be controlled in order to have healthy and abundant wild game populations; that predators are the primary disease carriers to man and other animals; and without predator control, even predators suffer.

Consequently, the college-educated WYG&F experts tell us: "We can't understand wild places unless we understand predators. As long as we deny the fact of predation or look on it as some sort of universal evil, we can't fully appreciate the processes of energy flows that sustain natural systems or the processes of evolution that shape them." (WYOMING WILDLIFE, December 1993, pg. 22)

Here is animal worship. Pure and simple. "All animals have their place. Let those coyotes alone. They're simply doing what's natural."

Can you imagine a suburban housewife finding mice while going through her family provisions in the cupboards and hear her comment: "My, nature at work in my cupboards. I must let them be. Their filth and disease are natural. Besides, they have a right to exist, too."

Statements like that would result in a quick call to the local psycho ward to have the lady admitted. But nonetheless, the coyotes have the "right" to exist, with no threat of control, even though they spread disease, take food from rancher's tables and decimate wildlife, "They're natural, leave them alone!"

That coyotes do some good is true. They do eat rodents in many cases. But to prevent management based on the little "good" they do is like saying we should ban fly swatters, and aerosol insecticides, because, flies are beneficial in that they assist in the decay process of a dead carcass.

Folks like Pete Petera, a man with common sense, are often held captive by college-educated greens within their own department. After all, Petera knows first hand the benefits of predator control and supports them.

The WYG&F has long touted Black-footed ferret recovery as one of its accomplishments. Its recovery is still questionable and many are asking why we spend so much money on a small masked weasel. That will not be discussed here. What will be discussed here is the fact that what recovery success there has been, is directly due to predator control, namely of coyotes and badgers.

WYG&F has contracted a trapper each year to trap coyotes and badgers in ferret release areas. The trapper is good. In 1991, he caught and destroyed 54 coyotes and 60 badgers; In 1992, 66 coyotes and 63 badgers. WYG&F also had aerial gunners come into recovery areas and shoot coyotes from airplanes.

Why do they kill coyotes and badgers? Their answer is: predator control and to control the incidence of disease, such as distemper and bubonic plague.

So publicly, while WYG&F, in an effort to appease the greenies by distancing itself from the coyote hunt, says, "The WYG&F therefore will not participate in an official capacity during the event" they are, in fact, using predator control to further their own agenda—ferret recovery.

Just how bad is predation in Campbell County? Let's take a look.

Abundant Wildlife Society of North America (AWS) is based in Campbell County, Wyoming. I'm second generation. My father, R.A. "Dick" Mader, Founder of AWS, was born and raised in this area and owns a ranch 10 miles north of Gillette.

Dick has always raised some livestock here on the ranch, although it was never his main source of income. (To our knowledge, we've never lost any livestock to coyotes.) And, in years past, we used to take in hunters. We take very few now. Predators — coyotes and eagles — keep our deer and antelope numbers low.

Here's some facts from the ground level. Twenty years ago, when preventive predator control was allowed and encouraged, we took in 20 to 25 nonresident hunters for deer or antelope or both. Today, we may allow 4 hunters at the most.

Turkeys have a very high mortality rate during winter months, especially if there's deep snow and/or bitter cold. This winter, for example, has been especially hard on the big birds. The reason is twofold: One, snow came in early and stayed; Two, we've had some warm weather, enough to thaw the snow and freeze again as ice on top of the ground, virtually guaranteeing little or no food from the ground. Since those warm times, we've had more snow. Consequently, for most of this winter, we've had a snow cover, anywhere from 6 inches to 2 feet, in Campbell

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Founder's Forum

By R. A. "Dick" Mader, Founder, Abundant Wildlife Society of North America

Here's an excellent article by the great Black American, Walter Williams.

Fear-Mongering, Hurting America

By Walter Williams

I worry about how we give self-declared experts the right to ruin our pocketbooks and country. We enact costly regulations based on predictions about the weather 50 years from now when the weatherman often can't get the prediction straight about tomorrow's weather.

Dr. Richard Lindzen, an MIT meteorology professor, says, "Many oceanographers and atmospheric scientists working on the climate share the view that the present global-warming hypothesis is largely a political issue without scientific basis." Politically motivated predictions, particularly by those feeding at the federal pork trough, aren't new. Let's look at it.

Texas A&M professors Maurice and Smithson document phony predictions in a Hoover Institution publication titled "The Doomsday Myth." In 1891, the U.S. Geological Survey predicted there was little or no chance of finding oil in Texas. It's a good thing Texans ignored these birdbrains. In 1926, the Federal Oil Conservation Board predicted the United States had a seven-year supply of oil remaining. In 1939, the Interior Department said we'd be out of oil in less than two decades. Ten years later, the secretary of the interior predicted that the end to the U.S. oil supply was almost in sight.

It's not just oil. Here are a few headlines from The New York Times between 1900 and 1908: "The End of Lumber Supply," "Timber Famine Near, Says Roosevelt and National Forest Service," "Urges Laws to Save Trees, Forest Will Be Wiped Out in Ten Years At Present Rates, Whipple Says." The doomsayers got us worried about water too. Here are a few title captions from national magazines during the '70's and '80's: "The Water Crisis; It's Almost Here," "What To Do When the Well Runs Dry," "Water: Will We Have Enough To Go Around?," "Water, Water, Running Out," "A Grim Future for the Water-Short West." Tell all that to Americans in Iowa, Kansas and Missouri.

If elitist fear-mongering made us tremble for a bit and later laugh at ourselves for being taken in, it would be one

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