

April 2017 FF BCH

General Meeting

4/20/17

Angelotti's

Meeting called to order @ 6:48 PM by Fred Fulcher

Guests: Karen Henderson and Marcie Clutter

A motion to approve the March 2017 minutes was made by Betty Lewis, 2nd by Karen Rossman and group approved.

Treasurer's report by Gary Reynolds. Motion to approve by Jean Damron, 2nd by Kathy Jackson and group approved.

General comments: Kathy Jackson mentioned that the Michigan BCH donated funds for the ranchers out West who were victims of the terrible wild fires and maybe we could do something like that.

Jean Damron mentioned that in this terrible dry spell we are having with fire danger extremely high that maybe forestry should close the forest to Jeepers. One spark could set off a wild fire and there are 20-30 jeepers and 4X4's behind her house every night.

Guest Speaker: Sarah Helm, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission biologist.

Topic: Coyotes

How did the coyotes get here? Coyotes appeared in the Mid 20's after the eradication of the Red Wolf. Red Wolves were wiped out in the 20's and coyotes filled the void. They loved the changes that man has made to the Florida landscape. Open spaces. They are now found in every county in Florida. They are even found in downtown Jacksonville. They typically weigh between 15 and 30 pounds. They exist in family groups and the adults mate for life and both parents care for the pups. A normal litter size is 6 pups. Pups are born in the spring. They have about a 15 square mile range of travel.

What do they really eat? 31% mammals, 15% bugs, plus vegetation, fruit nuts and seeds and about 9% from human sources. A diet study of dead coyotes revealed dog food, cooked chicken, pokeweed, McDonalds butter wrapper, Cadbury eggs, mice and rats and roaches.

Aesthetic value: They are part of the landscape. They help keep the ecosystem in check by controlling some of the smaller predators such as raccoon, fox and possum. There is less pressure on the bird population when coyotes are around to take care of the other predators. The other predators are nest robbers and typically coyotes are not.

Florida panthers eat the same foods generally focusing on the larger prey while coyotes focus on small stuff. So, they do not compete for food. Bob cats and coyotes do not overlap in territories. So they coexist pretty well.

Endangered species benefit because the coyotes take care of the other predators.

Human conflicts:

Some myths:

Coyotes are large – not true 15-30 pounds

They travel in packs and take down large animals – not true they travel in family units, not unrelated individuals and they focus on small animals. Livestock killing is a learned behavior, not instinctive. It's not a good idea to kill coyotes just because. If they are not already livestock killers, they will keep out other coyotes that may be.

Coy dogs – in theory this is possible but unlikely. We have not yet found any domestic dog DNA in any coyotes.

Disease is uncommon in a healthy population. They can carry rabies but this is extremely rare.

Stay with your small animals while outside. Walk dogs on a 6 ft leash and keep cats inside. Small pets should always be accompanied when out.

Never feed coyotes.

Coyote attacks are extremely rare 3/yr in two counties in contrast to 1000/day dog bites.

Shooting is OK if allowed where you live.

Box live traps.

Snare – rarely used as you can catch other animals.

Steel trap – not used much- indiscriminate also.

To prevent problems:

Secure your attractants – clean up pet food –clean up under bird feeders – keep cats indoors- keep dogs on leash when you are off your property.

You want coyotes to stay afraid of you. Make yourself big and intimidating. You can scare them with noise. Tin can filled with rocks, squirt water at them or have motion activated sprinklers – bear spray or firecrackers work also.

If you ever have a problem, call the regional office 386-758-0525 or myfwc.com/trappers. If you encounter an animal that looks sick, the Department of health will get involved.

Coyote howls: They have about 20 different vocalizations. They do a family sing which serves as a bonding function and also as an invisible fence.

Will they adapt to domestication? No- wild is wild

50/50 \$79 won by Greg Murphy

Meeting adjourned @8 PM.