

During the past COVID year, I along with many others, have found Baskett slough wildlife refuge a refuge for myself as well as the wildlife. Along with waterfowl, a favorite subject of photographers is the wily coyote, a beautiful member of the canine family much revered by indigenous people (and part of the logo for the nearby Spirit Mountain Casino.) The coyote is native to North America and occupies an essential niche in healthy ecosystems, as both predator and prey. I have enjoyed observing this versatile species in a wide array of environments my entire life. The best available, peer reviewed science shows that indiscriminate killing of coyotes is counterproductive and does not serve any beneficial wildlife management purpose. With this in mind, Oregon finally outlawed M-44, cyanide bombs, which caused a tortuous death to not only coyotes but incidental species as well. This year the state needs to follow up with passing HB 2728, which would outlaw coyote killing contests. This bill would prohibit cruel, irresponsible and wasteful coyote killing contests in Oregon that incentive people with cash and prizes for indiscriminately killing as many coyotes as possible. The impact of these contests is considerable. Three weeks ago, 272 coyotes were mass killed for a chance to win cash and prizes in the 2 day Harney County Coyote Classic. I know that cultural values vary throughout Oregon, but I cannot imagine that such an event is fun, fulfills some kind of civic duty, or teaches proper values to young people. What these contests do not do is decrease predation on livestock. They are a cruel, senseless slaughter of sentient beings which serves no purpose whatsoever. HB 2728 still allows the targeted killing of "problem" coyotes that prey on livestock. It only prohibits the wanton killing of a valuable species of wildlife and disrupts the balance in natural ecosystems. Please vote for this measure and bring Oregon into the 21st century of wildlife management and sensibility.