

Blackballed by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife: Research Obstruction Testimonial by an Independent Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Biologist

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Summary

Government corruption related to pandering to special interests is now capturing headlines more than ever. As a scientist with a specialization in canid and predator biology, I'm greatly concerned about an issue within my field that receives little if any meaningful media coverage. State wildlife agencies cater almost exclusively to narrow user groups despite changing demographics of public trust resources, and when my work as an independent scientist challenged the status quo policy positions within the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife my career was essentially terminated.

This testimonial is my "coming out". It's intended to give readers a specific, informed first-hand account of the power that state agencies wield on obstructing productive field work and discriminating against freedom of speech when scientists challenge their authority and policies. I hope that others may find the courage and inspiration to document similar discrimination and abuses, and that much needed reform may be jumpstarted within wildlife institutions.

Introduction

I am Dr. Jonathan (Jon) Way. I am a father, volunteer coach for youth basketball and football, author of two books, and currently live and work on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. I completed a Master's and Doctoral degree related to the study of eastern coyotes and I have published more than 40 professional peer-reviewed/edited publicationsⁱ, including a body of recent work that established a new species designation, based on genetic and morphological information, to call these animals 'coywolves', *Canis oriens* (meaning eastern canid)ⁱⁱ. Despite this, I have been unable to pursue my career and research goals for the past 7 years because the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MA Wildlife) has repeatedly obstructed my work and career by denying permits related to my research and interfering with my professional associations because my position contradicts their policies for carnivore management. I hope that by chronicling my experiences, institutional change within the department might follow.

It is important to bear in mind at the outset of this testimonial that the [history of science parallels a history of people and organizations – from churches to management entities – that have resisted new discoveries](#) that conflict with conventional wisdom and personal ideology. Research obstruction by government agencies is very common and has been known to interfere with the careers of the people who discovered climate change/global warming, acid rain, the [dangers of tobacco](#), and even more recently to silence scientists who (along with residents) [found](#)

[lead contaminations in the public water supply in Flint, Michigan](#). Clearly there are costs to doing unique science.

The problems I've encountered are not all that surprising given the structure of a typical state wildlife agency, but they are dismal procedure for an institution that is charged with the responsible management of a [public trust resource](#). State wildlife agencies generally hold exclusive power over wildlife as public trust resources and wildlife policy has often been crafted exclusively for narrow special interest groups like hunters instead of managing for a broad constituency or for greater ecological health or biodiversity. States often partially or wholly fund department budgets through hunter licensing. Consequently, the state agencies justify a bias for hunting interests whereby a citizenry that is concerned for wildlife is willfully ignored.

Evidence suggests that revising wildlife management policies would better serve the public trust and accommodate a broader citizenry, yet state wildlife agencies consistently resist institutional change. For example, in MA, demographics are changing and with them so are uses of public trust resources. In Massachusetts in 2011 alone, 1.8 million people spent \$1.3 billion on wildlife associated recreation. That is 32.6 times more people and 14.6 times more money than that spent on hunting in MA ([see page 4 of the MA survey](#)ⁱⁱⁱ). Also, recent research estimates that over [90% of funding for wildlife conservation comes from non-hunters](#) despite the repeated claims by wildlife agencies that hunters pay for wildlife management^{iv}. While hunters may pay agency personnel salaries there are many other sources of funding that contribute to wildlife conservation. This is especially true when considering the management of carnivores such as coyotes and wolves.

State wildlife management policies constitute a long history of unjust persecution of carnivores including year-round coyote hunting seasons in most states^v. State agencies routinely ignore the [widespread ecological importance](#) of carnivores^{vi} and allow virtually limitless killing of these species with no scientifically sound justification. For example, in Massachusetts, eastern coyotes/ coywolves are hunted for nearly half the year with few restrictions. They can be baited, called in with electronic predators calls, hounded with dogs, hunted at night, and killed with no restrictions on size, age, sex, or amount (i.e., no quotas per hunter). Hunting seasons do not consider their tight knit family unit or their ability to work together as a group to survive. There are no reporting requirements until the end of the half-year season, and even hunters with a known criminal past may hunt with a general license (see "Final Thoughts" on page 9-10).

Management strategies continue to rely on outdated models that are focused on killing species that compete for game, or alternatively on a maximum sustained yield (i.e., killing as many of a species as possible before "supply" decreases). The touted "[North American Model of Wildlife Management](#)" may work well for game birds, rabbits, and ungulates (deer) but is a terrible model for carnivores. Especially as Massachusetts, like most other states, typically violates ethical standards with long hunting seasons and questionable hunting methods on coyotes. At the least, state wildlife agencies that are entrusted with the care of public trust resources that belong to its citizens collectively have a duty to use best management practices, be open to adaptive management strategies, and agree to incorporate the best available science while listening to all of its constituents. Yet, funding and conflict of interest have created an institution where scientific integrity and input are devalued and dismissed, citizens opposed to wanton waste and aggressive hunting and killing are ignored, and adaptive management policies are slow to implement or woefully bypassed^{vii}. As Brooks Fahy, Executive Director of the national non-profit group [Predator Defense](#) notes (paraphrased), 'carnivores and carnivore researchers nationwide are forced to play in a rigged system designed to make things as difficult

as possible to benefit this group of animals, while state wildlife management agencies issue legal ‘kill permits’ that authorize literally anyone to freely kill them with few limits.”

In my case, my problems began when I published work in 2006-2007 that contradicted Massachusetts Wildlife department policy and expressed profound concerns about that departments’ handling of carnivores. Since then, my research permits have been denied, I have discovered that the agency influenced and disrupted my professional relationships with academic institutions and other peers, and my research-based career has halted. Ironically, independent scientists like myself are often in the best position to help shape policy that could embrace healthier ecosystem-based management of resources and address ordinary citizens’ concerns for better wildlife management.

[Independent scientists, such as university researchers](#), are often the creators of the body of “best available science” and [are less likely to be biased or politically motivated](#) than government (state or federal) ones, where monetary influence is rampant. Yet, instead of readily embracing new data and research, MA Wildlife, like many other wildlife agencies, see contrary research findings as ‘challenges to their authority’.

To be fair, state wildlife agencies are mostly composed of sincere, well-intentioned, hardworking people. Still, there is a persistent draconian, static resistance to change from the top down. As a scientist and a concerned citizen I believe these agencies have a duty to protect the [public trust in wildlife](#) and that this duty extends to considering and integrating relevant research and data into their management strategies, especially the wide body of science that has erupted in the past 10 years indicating the ecological importance of carnivores. [Unfortunately, state wildlife agencies have a propensity to stifle research that they don’t want pursued, or that conflicts with their agency mission, or that they subjectively have little interest in](#). When this paradigm is challenged by independent scientists, wildlife agencies may discredit or hinder independent scientists who are neither protected by university affiliation nor under tenured employment. When I challenged agency policy and determinations of my work, MA Wildlife created a campaign of retribution that has, for all intents and purposes, ended my research career. This account herewith documents the process of this systematic occurrence over time.

Background leading to MA Wildlife’s obstruction of my career: Stone Zoo Study and MA Wildlife

From 1998-2006, I conducted field studies on eastern coyotes. My research required scientific collecting permits to box trap, radio-collar, and release study subjects for scientific study in MA (both in the Boston area, and mainly at my long-term Cape Cod [Barnstable] study site). It also included conducting a side project that consisted of raising a captive litter of eastern coyotes that were housed at the Stone Zoo^{viii}.

As I made my way through graduate school I did not have many problems obtaining research permits and was able to renew scientific collecting permits. I hadn’t published many papers in professional journals so there was little conflict of interest with the wildlife agency and my research. Looking back, the study at the zoo was likely the beginning of my downfall with MA Wildlife. At the time I started the study at the zoo in 2002, I based the study on models of socialized canids like those used by respected institutions such as the International Wolf Center in Minnesota, the Wolf Conservation Center in New York, and Wolf Park in Indiana. The key to my socialized study and the behavioral data that I collected on the captive animals depended on hand rearing them with regular interaction between the coyotes and myself. As [my book](#)

[Suburban Howls documents](#), part way through the study, the zoo changed the in-place study parameters, arguing that the animals should have no interaction with me after they became aggressive with each other. At that point, however, the study would become invalid without the human interaction component. Still, in 2005, the zoo stopped giving me access to the animals that I hand-reared for 3 years.

When the zoo informed me that I could no longer interact with the animals, my doctoral advisor and I met with Dr. Tom French of MA Wildlife and asked them to intervene. In hindsight, MA Wildlife predictably sided with the zoo. Both institutions were resistant to change. This type of work with eastern coyotes/coywolves was routine in facilities focusing on using socialized canids for research, but at that time it was resisted because it dispelled numerous myths about the much-maligned wild canid and involved much direct hands-on contact with this controversial urbanized animal.

Unable to reformat the study without the necessary personal interaction with the coyotes, I had to abandon it altogether. The animals had bonded with me and it was painful and disruptive personally and professionally to be forced to lose the study data and start again observing the animals only from outside the exhibit as the zoo proposed, because it was impossible to continue within the original parameters. The data gathering would not be consistent and both the coyotes and I would, in effect, be punished by interactions limited by no contact. It also felt like visiting family members in jail. Not only would the study suffer, but the coyotes were having difficulty with the sudden unnatural constraints to our normal research-related contact that they had become accustomed to since infancy.

As the zoo worked to constrain the study, I began to document the institutions' decisions on my website, [Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research](#)^{ix}. Concurrently, I also documented the fate of many of my wild research subjects. In the course of doing my field research, many of the animals in the study were needlessly shot by 'hunters'. The website became a place to document the killing of these highly social and intelligent animals and of the unwillingness by MA Wildlife to provide even the most meager of protections for these collared research animals. In the pursuit to protect the research animals, I sent [a letter to the town of Barnstable](#) in 2006^x asking for help in creating a non-hunting refuge. Consequently, I also published my book of years of my previous research results, *Suburban Howls*, in 2007. Together, the actions I took to study and protect coyotes brought me into a head-to-head conflict with MA Wildlife by contradicting their policies^{xi}.

In looking back at those early years, I was very naïve about the potential consequences of bucking a bureaucratic we've always-done-it-this-way governmental system. John Theberge in his [1998 book Wolf Country](#) comments that bureaucratic workplaces are tainted by 'issue avoiders', rather than 'issue solvers'. He stated that "(wildlife agencies) will throw endless barriers in your way (p. 181)." He wrote from the perspective of actual experience as he tried to study and protect the wolves in Algonquin Park, Ontario. Theberge described (p. 183) how researchers who go against the tide will suffer in a series of cascading actions designed to stop their work and just make them 'go away'. In his experience, the first step in the deliberate process was action taken to discredit him and occurred as the agency sought minor permit violations to paint him as a criminal and to document anything they could label as "non-compliance". Then, the wildlife agencies refuted or ignored his research findings and questioned his methodology and the need for the research. Finally, further attempts were made to either

discredit him or to shut down his research. Amazingly, this process happened to me in a nearly identical fashion.

MA Wildlife: An institutional campaign of retribution and obstruction

Starting in 2007 my real problems began. Having finished my graduate degrees in late 2005/early 2006, now my former doctoral advisor^{xii} and I both found our methodology and research consistently under heightened scrutiny, despite well-defined research goals and clearly articulated methodology. Due to the deliberate obstruction and delay of our research proposals, we had no permits to trap and collar any new study subjects for most of the next year (2007). It wasn't until 2008 that we finally received new permits.

Further, while our permits and research stagnated, we lost more than a few radio-collared subject animals to hunters. The state wildlife department freely issues ~\$30 hunting licenses (including online), without reserve, to anyone who wants to kill coyolves, even to those with an outward professed hatred of 'coyotes,'^{xiii} but my own studies continued to be stymied by an inability to obtain non-lethal research permits. The injustice of my treatment as a scientist and for the research animals lost through hunting created a deep-seated negativity that I vented on my website. In that same time frame, I was developing a program of public speaking venues from schools and outdoor clubs to local libraries to discuss my research and share information on my current gathered data on the eastern coyote. The talks are ongoing and are always well received and highly attended^{xiv}. A trusted source at MA Wildlife indicated that this had likely caused professional jealousy within the department, further igniting an already flammable situation.

By early 2009, the handwriting was on the wall as MA Wildlife started its real vendetta against me. Throughout a series of separate 'business meetings' in February-March 2009 with myself and my former doctoral advisor, MA Wildlife determined that my university affiliation with Boston College had terminated (because I had completed my doctoral studies), even though Boston College was the sponsoring institution for the research. In a similar vein of the treatment that Theberge experienced, MA Wildlife also raised a series of trivial 'non-compliance' issues. The list of cited violations included 'not labeling a trap' (which could have been pulled off at any time by anyone), 'trapping in a residential area' (my backyard) which was not prohibited but they stated that I supposedly 'used poor judgment' in doing that (despite successfully radio-collaring four study subjects there), and they alleged that we also sent in annual reports late. In the latter instance, I would write an annual end-of-year report and send it to my former advisor, who read it over, edited it if necessary, and then forwarded it to them. That total process would usually take 4-5 weeks, a relatively short time when looking at other programs. For example, researchers working full time on the Yellowstone Wolf Project might take over 6 months to complete and publish their annual reports.

During the meeting with MA Wildlife, I spoke out about some "good ole boy" minions that worked for the town of Barnstable and held MA Wildlife's same ideology. The comment did nothing to increase my popularity with MA Wildlife, despite its basis in truth. These individuals had always questioned my research and worked to taint my reputation locally. Their ingrained bias against carnivores like coyotes made it impossible for them to digest research that contradicted their prejudice even when both the study and my work received positive feedback and support from many with whom I was in contact or worked with, including hunters, the police, and especially the general public.

When I left the March 2009 meeting, I believed that I had satisfied all requests and complaints that were voiced and that I would be receiving new permits and now be able to work independently on my eastern coyote/coywolf research through my organization *Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research*. In an attempt to defuse the situation, I told them that I would start conducting my research in a much ‘quieter’ fashion by doing less public posting of my research findings. Even so, and despite the precautions, shortly after that meeting [I received a letter from the Director of MA Wildlife, Wayne MacCallum, denying the permits](#) and listing the many supposed ‘non-compliance’ issues that I had just resolved with MA Wildlife.

As a matter of information, the spring 2009 meeting was not conducted by the director of MA Wildlife, Wayne MacCallum, but by three of his immediate subordinates. In fact, in all of the many years conducting research, I have never actually met the Director of MA Wildlife. It baffles me that the person ultimately responsible for denying my research and for hobbling my career has never met with me face to face.

The obvious conclusion of the series of meetings was for the Director to separate me from my former doctoral advisor and then to promptly deny the research permits. The meeting was not intended to resolve “concerns”, rather it served as an exercise to go through the motions to satisfy procedural and administrative process. After having lost my zoo study, the denial of permits was devastating to me. Still, I was naïve about the power of the agency to completely halt my career. But I was beginning to understand. By now, I had lost access to the captive group of study subjects that I hand-raised a couple of years earlier; I lost all of my research, and my way of life, all in the span of a short few years. I even left my high school teaching job shortly afterward.

Determined to fight this, I looked to colleagues who advised me how to appeal the decision because there was no formal process contained within the permit denial informing an applicant how to appeal a denial. Following advice, [I filed a prompt written appeal within two days in March of 2009](#). When writing the plea, it occurred to me how lopsided it was to be writing an appeal to an agency where no arbitration or separate appeals process was actually available. So not surprisingly, in April 2009 I received a letter back from MA Wildlife in which they [“held their decision” and denied me a permit for the same reasons](#) discussed in the March 2009 meeting.

Later that spring, and again on the recommendation of colleagues, I sought out and found a great local state representative who became a true friend, and helped me greatly during this difficult time. I explained that the claims of ‘non-compliance’ were cherry-picked to make me appear like a criminal and unwilling to work within the system. The representative contacted Dr. Rob Deblinger, the Deputy Director of MA Wildlife at the time, and questioned the denial of the permit. To summarize, the local rep. characterized the process as unjust and ridiculous. Yet even the state representative could not make them budge.

MA Wildlife insisted that my university affiliation was terminated. Their insistence on university affiliation as a threshold to a permit created an impassable barrier at the time and made no sense since I always collaborated with a local veterinary hospital - Hyannis Animal Hospital - and rehabilitation clinic - Cape Wildlife Center - and was myself a Ph.D actively pursuing research. Furthermore, the two institutions I worked with provided the necessary professional services to assist in the safe handling, radio-collaring, and release of every study subject. I experienced a great level of frustration because as a researcher and doctoral graduate I was being held to a different standard, supposedly designed to ensure safety for the public and the subject animals. But clearly the standard as applied to me was designed specifically to hinder

research. Conversely, hunters could easily obtain permits to kill and maim ‘coyotes’ for nearly half the year with the agency’s blessing.

In an effort to move forward, I asked my former Master’s advisor for university affiliation as a research biologist in Fall 2009 at the University of Connecticut Storrs. They complied. [As this email communication indicates, I nearly had full university approval in December 2009.](#) However, shortly after my contact with MA Wildlife, informing them that I had satisfied the university affiliation requirement, the University rescinded their decision to give me the research protocol. The abrupt termination of the research protocol following my contact with the Department raised suspicions of interference. One colleague argued that it seemed likely that MA Wildlife had contacted the university to disparage me and my work. Without the IACUC (Institutional Animal Care Use) protocol as it’s called, my MA legislator friend could not help me, even though some lawyers I spoke with advised me that it was questionably legal to require an IACUC in the first place – especially since I have a Ph.D. degree related to the research taking place and work with trained veterinarians.

Soon after the failed attempt to obtain affiliation, I next tried working with a [lawyer colleague to reach the Governor.](#) We indicated that we intended to sue the state for hindering my research and career but [we could not overcome the university affiliation ‘threshold’ requirement,](#) especially after UConn Storrs withdrew their support in December 2009. It would have been exceedingly expensive and an uncertain outcome if I followed through with this legal process.

The next two years (2010 – 2012) proved to be just as frustrating and depressing. Without university IACUC support, I could not conduct critical research on the radio collared study subjects. All of the batteries of my existing radio-collared animals were wearing out so I could no longer radio-track them. Without the permits I could not replace the batteries on the collars.

After a couple years of no action, (with the help of a compassionate animal-friendly friend) I spent months reaching out to environmental lawyers that might have more specialization in this type of case. We ended up finding a very promising one that also thought the charges were trumped up, but he understandably wanted me to have IACUC support first as that ‘threshold’ permit condition before intervening. So, it was back to the drawing board in terms of finding university support.

Obstruction by an agency shadowed by incompetence and corruption, Deputy Director forced to resign after being spotted in strip clubs using Department vehicles and resources.

In 2013, I finally got a break when I was appointed as an unpaid research scientist to Clark University in central MA. Clark was interested in my work, and I rapidly [received IACUC protocols from them in October 2013.](#) In moving through the IACUC process, I initially didn’t inform anyone except a couple of close friends of my affiliation with this university out of fear of having my relationship with the University interfered with again. When the IACUC protocol was approved, [I immediately sent in the permit request to MA Wildlife.](#) For the next six months, however, MA Wildlife delayed a decision. Clark University requested that I let them handle the process, and I complied.

In February-March, when my colleagues met with Dr. Tom French and a colleague at MA Wildlife to inquire why the permits had not been issued, they raised the same old “non-compliance” issues that I thought had already been resolved multiple times. The University now refuted the claims that had already been covered with my state representative in 2009. The

grievances were petty and could easily have been resolved, but MA Wildlife had no intention of providing permits.

Equally as troubling, I learned that MA Wildlife also denied plans for me to create an Eastern Coyote/ Coywolf Discovery Center based on the model of the world famous International Wolf Center in Ely MN using captive animals as ambassadors and study subjects. Dr. French specifically told my colleagues that they would never permit this. By now, the words that described the process of deliberate interference in John Theberg's book [Wolf Country](#) were becoming frightening realities as my career stagnated, and my career goal (i.e., the Discovery Center) was being categorically denied.

The level of hypocrisy, corruption, and deliberate attempts within MA Wildlife to thwart my research and my career took me by surprise. Under Department regulations hunters are allowed to kill 'coyotes' (coy wolves) with few restrictions. Yet, as a widely published scientist who has dedicated his career to the study of a local species, I could not obtain research permits or work toward a potentially economically beneficial tourism drawing project like the Eastern Coyote Discovery Center even though I work with professional staff to ensure the handling of the study animals using the most modern, professional, and safe techniques. In direct contrast, the agency allows [Mission Wolf to bring wolves to Cape Cod](#) for display and every year [King Richard's Faire brings in captive large cats](#) including exotic tigers to southeastern MA.

As if to underscore the corruption in the department, at the time of my '[permit review](#)' under renewed university affiliation with Clark, I learned in the Fall 2014 that the same Deputy Director of MA Wildlife, Dr. Deblinger, who helped in denying my permits in 2009, and to whom I submitted my permit request in October 2013, and who was ultimately partly responsible for denying it in 2014, had been the subject of an undercover sting operation.

[In a Fox news report](#), the Deputy was fired for frequenting strip clubs in Rhode Island during work hours. He arrived for work in a MA Wildlife vehicle and went to the clubs during the day, then left when it was time to check out at MA Wildlife at the close of business, all the while using state owned vehicles and charging the state for work. I learned later that he resigned shortly after the story became public, and I believe he received half of his \$106,000 salary per year as a pension. No further investigations, to my knowledge, were conducted.

Permits Denied even with University Support

In April 2014, while in the middle of a seasonal half-year job which I worked from 2010-2016 to survive financially, [I received the news that my permit request was denied](#) again. This time the discrimination was transparent and obvious. MA Wildlife denied the permits even though I complied completely with their request for university affiliation and secured a local veterinarian to work with. To the astonishment of my close colleagues, the state continued to cite old "violations" that had been addressed previously (in 2009 and numerous times thereafter) and included additional supposed "violations" that were patently false. Included in the list of new violations were transgressions supposedly committed in a part of Barnstable (Sandy Neck Beach) that I had neither worked in nor visited for 7-8 years.

In seeking out the reasons for the denial I was told that high level officials at MA Wildlife spoke very negatively of me at the meeting with Clark University and challenged the validity of my research. Disturbingly, MA Wildlife threatened to rescind any research permit(s) they might issue at any time if they didn't "like or approve" of my activities, including posts on my personal website. Unfortunately, even though my colleagues were flabbergasted by the

rejection letter, they also noted that the university was also fearful of the potential fallout from MA Wildlife. So, perhaps not surprising, about two months after the permit re-rejection by the state, [Clark withdrew their IACUC support](#), and ever since my affiliation with them has been a paper tiger. In August 2016, perhaps not surprisingly, my relationship with Clark concluded.

Re-seeking Lawyer and State Representative Support

I decided to fight back. In mid-April 2014 I contacted an aide from the MA Senate President's Office hoping to get assistance in obtaining the permits "quietly" without creating issues for me or Clark. When nothing was accomplished, I then spoke with Brooks Fahy of Predator Defense. In mid-July 2014, [Brooks sent a letter to the Senate President](#) requesting a formal investigation. In the letter, Mr. Fahy outlined the problems I experienced as well as the [resignation of the deputy director](#) and the impact that the denial of permits was having on my career and research.

Despite the request to prominent Cape Cod politicians throughout summer and fall 2014, and intermittently since then, my case was falling through the cracks. After fruitlessly waiting thru fall 2014 for something to happen, I re-contacted my environmental lawyer friend but the process has been difficult and hindered because MA Wildlife has inconsistent cryptic 'policies' that make it difficult to prove obstruction or blackballing. For example, the lack of an appeals process makes it very daunting for a lawyer or for state representatives to prove direct bias.

As I write this in summer 2016, I am still searching for a lawyer, politician, or maybe even an investigative journalist to look into my seemingly hopeless situation. And still I am denied the opportunity to conduct research on coyotes/coywolves, the social, intelligent, [family-oriented species](#) that are the victims of deliberate persecution through a half-year long unlimited hunting season in MA. It is clear that these policies deserve to be reexamined in light of my research and that of other carnivore scientists.

On Redirecting Policy

The stranglehold that this state agency holds on wildlife policy extends beyond state lands and has consequences even in places like our national parks in Massachusetts that are areas intended to be left preserved unimpaired for future generations. Cape Cod National Seashore at ~45,000 acres is nearly the size of Acadia National Park, making it one of the largest national parks in the Northeast.

When it was created in 1961, a concession was made to allow traditional hunting, which was outlined as for deer, turkey and other commonly eaten species. Given the nature of and mandates of national parks, it would be a reasonable expectation that non-traditional hunting would be excluded, such as hunting for sport for species that are not eaten, like carnivores. And that shorter (say, 1 week) bow and arrow hunting seasons for species like deer, rabbits, and a few gamebirds like ducks would prevail. That would allow the "traditional" use of hunting, but give precedence to providing adequate protections for humans and wildlife and also respect the spirit and intent of national parks.

But here in MA, the Cape Cod National Seashore aligns with most of the MA Wildlife hunting laws and currently allows for a 3-month deer season, 5 months of fox and "coyote" hunting, and many other unjustified hunting seasons. A recently implemented wild turkey hunting season is 3 of 4 weeks in May pushing right up to the peak of the tourist season starting

Memorial Day weekend. A friend at the Seashore informed me that MA Wildlife called and complained to the Seashore when they *only* allowed 3 of the 4 weeks of spring turkey hunting.

Through my research I have come to appreciate the necessity for refuges from hunting. As such, I participated in a [petition in December 2014](#) that sought to ban unnecessary carnivore hunting in the park. Hundreds of people signed it including top carnivore scientists, as well as dozens of local people. The petition outlined many important factors that should be driving a ban including the ecological importance of carnivores, that hunting carnivores was never a traditional activity, and that wildlife is a public trust resource owned by all citizens – not just hunters. If a national park like Cape Cod National Seashore allows carnivore hunting then where can wildlife live unharmed where can people enjoy undisturbed wildlife watching? For perspective, carnivore persecution was stopped in Yellowstone and Denali National Parks in the 1930s and 1940s, respectively.

In February 2015, Brooks Fahy of Predator Defense received a response from the Seashore indicating that they had reviewed the petition but that the enabling legislation contained provisions for hunting. They did not, however, address our complaint that the EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) specifically referred to traditional hunting and that it also stated that carnivore hunting was not a traditional activity. There was no valid reason to ignore the petition. The letter also stated that they did not find a reason to end carnivore hunting in the national park and were unaware of any management issues associated with the practice since ‘carnivores appeared abundant in the park.’ This finding was contrary to the concerns in the petition that was signed by many of the nation’s top independent carnivore and wildlife specialists. To date, no one has ever collected any data on carnivores inhabiting the Seashore so the Park (and state) has no actual data on which to base their claim.

When MA Wildlife extended the black bear hunting season in 2015 for most of the fall and now throughout the state even in places where they currently don’t live, including within our national parks, they demonstrated a determination to a hunter-centric model of wildlife management and ignored the contributions and concerns of [wildlife watchers who contribute over a billion dollars to the MA economy](#). The bear issue also illustrated the state’s willingness to ignore the tenets of the North American Model of Wildlife Management including the mandate that hunting practices should be sustainable. On announcing the new bear hunting regulations, [MA Wildlife’s website indicated their excitement at the expanded hunting season by using exclamation marks to underscore the new rule](#).^{xv}

Final Thoughts

In review, MA Wildlife has exerted undue influence to impede my career and research. As an independent scientist with considerable expertise in wildlife and canid biology, the state ignored an opportunity to collaborate and perhaps advance their understanding of wild canids which might have been a basis to adapt the agency’s management to fulfill their duty to protect public trust resources. Instead they have chosen to defame me and my work, to disrupt my professional affiliations and to prevent me from conducting unique and valuable research that I had begun over a decade and a half ago. While this might occur in some countries where undue political interference, such as fascism, is common, it is unacceptable in the United States.

Ironically, within days of the ‘Carnivore Hunting Ban’ letter and petition that was submitted to the Seashore in December 2014, I was the victim of two gunshot wounds from a hunter. The shooting occurred in the town of Barnstable on state-owned land about 30 minutes

past dusk when the hunter saw movement and opened fire, shooting multiple times in my direction, saying he thought there were deer nearby.

I survived the encounter but left a half-mile blood trail to the shooter's car where he called 911 to help me. I had to have a bullet (buckshot) removed from my neck and had my back and hand stitched up from my gunshot wounds. The man who shot me had a criminal history and illegally possessed a firearm, but somehow he obtained 'a valid hunting license' from MA Wildlife; also, he was hunting in the second week of shotgun deer season, which was the first or the second year that MA Wildlife extended hunting to allow shotgun use for two full weeks on heavily populated Cape Cod. The event deeply affected me and created an even deeper conviction that our wildlife agencies need to be overhauled. The man's trial has been delayed repeatedly and he presently isn't scheduled to stand trial until later in 2016, nearly two years after this incident.

Conclusion

It is my hope that people will be moved by my story. It is clear that because I have chosen to publish work that contradicts MA Wildlife and to speak against bad policy, I've been the victim of serious discrimination that could end my career, has threatened professional relationships, and caused me great anguish, as well as preventing valuable research from being conducted. The wildlife agencies responsible for this discrimination are hyper-conservative organizations with incredibly biased viewpoints highly influenced by a small minority of hunters. While they are quick to implement aggressive hunting, they are equally adept at ignoring research that conflicts with their ideology. In my case, it is most notable that MA Wildlife has disregarded the numerous papers that I (and other highly qualified scientists) have published on the territorial nature of coyotes and the fact that killing them does not help reduce their populations. In addition, and perhaps most notable due to its national coverage, are the findings that the eastern coyote is a hybrid between coyotes and wolves and a recent paper that I published suggests that we call this creature [coywolf and a new species, *Canis oriens*](#). State wildlife agencies in the Northeast U.S. do not even recognize the term, let alone debate about it. The [name change](#) is significant because the agency might have to protect these animals if they are [acknowledged as part-wolf](#) (which in actuality, they are).

Make no mistake. Nothing will change, even with testimonial such as this, unless MA Wildlife's policies are actively challenged. It will take legislators, lawyers, and journalists to force change and to show even a modest amount of democracy in their management policies, especially toward carnivores, a species that a small minority (probably about one percent) of hunters target, who are already a tiny segment of the population in MA (literally ~1% of the 1%, or 0.01%).

Given the changing demographics of fewer people hunting while many more people pursue wildlife watching and a general interest in non-consumptive uses of wildlife, it is critical that these agencies appropriate reform accordingly. It is dire that the people at the top of these agencies are targeted first, especially since the vast majority are middle-aged white men who have had monopolies over wildlife policy and department ideology for decades, but who now are a minority in their own right. This pro-hunting, anti-science stance needs to be replaced with a more egalitarian model where wildlife boards consist of a variety of stakeholders, all of which have a legitimate interest in wildlife policy. I discuss some of these strategies at length in [my paper on how red wolf \(*Canis rufus*\) recovery in the southeast U.S. has been hijacked](#) by special

interests. If changes are not made, then additional scientists' careers will be destroyed because they hold opposing views not shared by the staff at MA Wildlife and other state wildlife departments.

What can be done?

1. Immediate restructuring of the fish and wildlife board to include diversity in user groups. For example, wildlife NGOs (who are much more numerous than hunting groups, especially in urban states like MA) and independent biologists should be included in directing wildlife policy and not treated as outsiders.

2. Reconsider the management of carnivores that aligns with their ecological, aesthetic, and cultural importance^{vi}. I have co-written a [Carnivore Conservation Act for Massachusetts](#) that can guide managers to more humane and publicly accepted hunting practices including providing refuges from hunting (like on state and federal parks and forests), banning baiting and night hunting, and limiting or ending trophy hunting of carnivores^{vii}.

3. Provide for an independent body (separate from the traditional fish and game board) to manage species like carnivores that are not hunted for food. This would be especially important in more rural states where hunting as well as livestock interests dominate wildlife management policy. An agency more dedicated to parks would seem reasonable as they are typically more concerned with preservation and less influenced by special interests.

4. Revising the Director position term at MA Wildlife to something that is limited to a reasonable length of time (perhaps 4 years) instead of an indefinite period that prevents wildlife policy from changing for generations due to ideology conflicts and the long tenure of the position.

5. Provide for an independent agency (like from the Governor's office) that is not directly tied to wildlife agencies to issue research permits and provide for a public and transparent appeals process. This could be accomplished as it is in the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS uses an independent agency based in Fort Collins, CO that reviews protocols for individual parks throughout the country. Also, the NPS issues 3 year permits which seem much more reasonable than MA Wildlife's 1 year permits.

6. Have wildlife departments funded by multiple sources including general funds. This will remove the inherent bias in hunting and fishing dollars funding most of the department and will also implicitly acknowledge that wildlife watching is an important economic activity.

Thank you for reading this testimonial to the continued obstruction of my career and research by the management individuals of MA Wildlife. I hope that this information provides a window into how wildlife management policy is governed, how corrupted the process is in Massachusetts, and how biased this state's agency is.

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Appendix 1: Important links/documents used in relative order of first use in account above

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/BrooksLetterToTMurrayOnPDLetterhead2014.pdf>

<http://easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/BarnstableCoyoteDeerMgmt.pdf>

<http://easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/HuntingBarnstablePetitionBHS.PDF>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/ThebergeWolfCountryPoliticsPart.PDF>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/Permit2009Denial.PDF>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/AppealToWayneMacCallum.pdf>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/AppealDenialApril2009.PDF>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/PendingApprovalFromUConn2009.pdf>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/PatrickLetter11-23-10.pdf>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/OSheaLetter12-6-10.pdf>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/025R-ProtocolActionLetter.pdf>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/CommunicationWithMAWildlifeOctober-November2013.pdf>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/FoxNewsLetter.pdf>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/MAWildlifeLetterOfRejectionApr14.PDF>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/IACUCActionMemoWayJuly2014.pdf>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/CCSeashoreCarnivoreHuntingLetterDec2014.pdf>

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/MAWildlifeAllowingBearHuntingStatewideUsingExclamationPoints.pdf>

Footnotes

ⁱ ~40 first author papers appearing in the following peer-reviewed journals: The Conversation, Journal of Wildlife Management, Canid Biology and Conservation, Northeastern Naturalist, Wildlife Society Bulletin, American Midland Naturalist, Canadian Field-Naturalist, Electronic Journal of Science Education, Canid News, Journal of Field Ornithology, Northeast Wildlife, & Cities and the Environment. Plus, numerous articles written for magazines, websites, and newspapers.

ⁱⁱ Relevant publications include:

Way, J.G. 2016. Why the eastern coyote should be a separate species: the ‘coywolf’. The Conversation. 11 May. URL: <https://theconversation.com/why-the-eastern-coyote-should-be-a-separate-species-the-coywolf-59214>.

Way, J.G. and Lynn, W.S. 2016. Northeastern coyote/coywolf taxonomy and admixture: A meta-analysis. *Canid Biology & Conservation* 19(1): 1-7. URL: http://canids.org/CBC/19/Northeastern_coyote_taxonomy.pdf.

Way, J.G. 2013. Taxonomic Implications of Morphological and Genetic Differences in Northeastern Coyotes (Coywolves) (*Canis latrans* × *C. lycaon*), Western Coyotes (*C. latrans*), and Eastern Wolves (*C. lycaon* or *C. lupus lycaon*). *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 127(1): 1–16.

Way, J.G. 2013. Taxonomic Implications of Morphological and Genetic Differences in Northeastern Coyotes (Coywolves) (*Canis latrans* × *C. lycaon*), Western Coyotes (*C. latrans*), and Eastern Wolves (*C. lycaon* or *C. lupus lycaon*). *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 127(1): 1–16.

ⁱⁱⁱ Link to MA survey: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/fhw11-ma.pdf>

^{iv} link to research illustrating that non consumptive users spend more money on wildlife conservation: <http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/who-really-pays-for-wildlife-in-the-u-s/>

^v For more on coyote persecution read *Coyote America* by Dan Flores (2016; Basic Books, New York)

^{vi} For example, see:

Gilbert et al. 2016. Socioeconomic benefits of large carnivore recolonization through reduced wildlife-vehicle collisions. *Conservation Letters* DOI: 10.1111/conl.12280.

Estes, J.A., et al. 2011. Trophic downgrading of planet earth. *Science* 333: 301–306.

Ripple, W.J., et al. (2014). Status and ecological effects of the world’s largest carnivores. *Science* 343: 151–162.

^{vii} For example, Jennifer Jackman of Salem State has data indicating widespread disapproval of “coyote” hunting methods on Cape Cod, MA and has published data showing increase public acceptance of coyotes on Cape Cod (*Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, 2015, 20:333-348). In addition, Louise Kane and myself have published North America’s first Carnivore Conservation Act, and it is designed for MA – although MA officials have yet to acknowledged the peer-reviewed document. For more, see:

<http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com/worlds-first-carnivore-conservation-act/> and <http://www.carnivoreconservationact.com/>.

^{viii} Please see my book *Suburban Howls* for a full accounting of the project and the problems encountered in working with the Stone Zoo and MA Wildlife.

^{ix} Link to website: <http://www.easterncoyotereseach.com>

^x Letter to Town of Barnstable can be found here:

<http://easterncoyotereseach.com/downloads/BarnstableCoyoteDeerMgmt.pdf>

^{xi} For instance, a highly ranked official at MA Wildlife immediately called one of my close colleagues after I submitted the letter to the town of Barnstable asking why in the world I would write such a document. It is important to realize that the town of Barnstable, consisting of a few cronies tied to MA Wildlife and the hunting industry, denied this letter despite a [sizable petition from Barnstable High School students](#) to enact some sort of hunting ban.

^{xii} Note: colleague names are purposefully redacted

^{xiii} Note: MA Wildlife has not acknowledged the coywolf term and their commonly accepted hybrid background.

^{xiv} As of Sept. 2016, I have given 263 programs on eastern coyotes to 14,243-14,613 people.

^{xv} Link to bear hunting regulation changes:

<http://www.easterncoyoteresearch.com/downloads/MAWildlifeAllowingBearHuntingStatewideUsingExclamationPoints.pdf>