

Area reps split on coyote bounty

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

There are no coyotes in western Wayne and Oakland Counties, and some state representative want it to stay that way.

State Rep. Dominic Jacobetti, D-Negaunee, and his Upper Peninsula allies who turned back an attempt to repeal the \$15-a-head coyote bounty last week picked up some support from suburban representatives.

State Reps. John Bennett, D-Redford; Jack Kirksey, R-Livonia; Robert Law, R-Livonia; Wilbur Brotherton, R-Farmington; and Richard Fessler, R-Union Lake voted to continue the controversial bounty.

Area representatives voting to discontinue the bounty were: Thomas Brown, D-Westland; William Keith, D-Garden City; Roy Smith, R-Ypsilanti;

James Defebaugh, R-Birmingham; Ruth McNamee, R-Birmingham; and Sal Rocca, D-Sterling Heights.

THE COYOTE bounty question is an annual affair in the Michigan Legislature. In years past, however, State Sen. Joseph Mack, D-Ironwood, then-chairman of the senate conservation committee, let the bill die.

With a less-influential Mack hospitalized, recovering from open-heart surgery, however, one version of the bill discontinuing the bounty was approved in the house. That's when Jacobetti, the influential appropriations committee chairman, took command of the show.

With a grand display of lobbying and theatrics, which reached its high point when he jammed a stuffed fawn between the barred fangs of a stuffed coyote, Jacobetti turned the vote around.

Many observers credited the turnaround more to his position on the appropriations committee than to his melodramatic display. Brotherton said some legislators "wanted to gain points with Jacobetti."

AREA LEGISLATORS, however, said Jacobetti's control over the state's purse strings was not a factor in determining their votes.

Brotherton, who previously opposed the bounty, said he "got disgusted with the whole thing" and decided to support the bounty this time around.

"When you don't have a real strong feeling about a piece of legislation," the Farmington lawmaker said, "you figure, 'What the heck, I'll vote for it.' You do that hoping that maybe someday he'll do the same thing for one of your bills."

Besides, he said, "It really doesn't cost the state that much — under \$20,000 a year. Not that many people collect the bounty. Those that hunt the coyotes would probably sell the pelts on the open market."

"You can up to \$60 per pelt in the fur market, so why would somebody bother to turn a pelt in to DNR (Department of Natural Resources) for \$15 or \$20?" he said.

"I thought the people from the Upper Peninsula presented some pretty valid

arguments. It's a problem that only affects the Upper Peninsula, and every representative from the Upper Peninsula opposed the repeal.

"Let's face it," he added, "the coyote bounty doesn't make a hell of a lot of difference in Oakland County."

ANOTHER BOUNTY supporter, Kirksey, likewise discounted Jacobetti's appropriations influence.

Kirksey, who has consistently backed the bounty, cited two factors for his support.

First, he said, the Upper Peninsula's ecological balance is not being damaged by the bounty. Second, large numbers of skunks are mistaken for coyotes and killed. Because bird eggs are an integral part of a skunk's diet, Kirksey said, the coyote bounty was unwittingly helping to maintain the UP's bird population.

Redford's Bennett supported the coyote bounty for different reasons. The bill upon which the house recently reversed itself was a senate version. That version would have eliminated bounties on sparrows, starlings and rats.

"I didn't vote to keep the bounty on coyotes," Bennett said. "I voted to keep the bounty on rats."

"I'm interested in eradicating rats in Detroit and other cities — not coyotes," he added.

Bounty: Welfare by the gunshot

By LEM MESESE
Outdoors writer

My pal C.O. Jones and I were taking the youngsters fishing on an Upper Peninsula river one day at dusk. Across the road ahead of us raced a small, reddish animal.

"A fox!" shouted an 11-year-old.

Not quite, answered C.O., our wild-life expert. It was bigger than a fox, not quite as red — in fact, almost blond on the sides.

We had spotted a coyote, the relative of the dog and the wolf who is causing such a fuss in the Michigan Legislature over bounties.

To understand the coyote bounty debate, you have to remember that the UP has had a depressed economy since the copper mines ran out and the iron mines ran low. The jobs simply aren't there. As long as I can remember, the UP never has had less than 12 percent unemployment, and the closing of Kinross Air Force Base didn't help.

COYOTES ARE actually doing well in the face of civilization.

Wolves have been wiped out almost. There are probably 50 or fewer in the entire state, the biggest group on Isle Royale.

Coyotes are around by the thousands. The deer herd has actually increased with the advent of farming because deer can't browse in deep forests, and the same is true of the coyote.

Coyotes you don't want around if you have livestock. But in the wilds, the coyote is just part of God's nature, living off prolific small animals.

Predator animals rarely try to bring down a deer in warm weather. There's no need. Rodents are plentiful, and deer are healthy. In cold weather, predators bring down deer that will probably die anyway.

YET THE PEOPLE don't want to live. The UP is more than a place to live; it's a way of life.

The legislators take care of their constituents by finding ways for the state to pay them money. One of those ways is the coyote bounty — \$15 for a male, \$20 for the female.

The social usefulness of such a bounty depends on your point of view. On one hand, you could say it's better for the state to pay bounties on wild reddish dogs than to pay welfare; that bounties are more dignified and less emasculating than the dole.

On the other hand, what's so bright about paying grown men to kill a wild animal whose harm to the ecosystem is minimal?

The coyote rarely, if ever, kills a deer. C.O. told us around the campfire later that night. The coyote, like the wolf, eats mice, rats, ground squirrels, birds. A deer is too big a meal for him.

Besides, when you think of it logically, a coyote or a wolf can't run down a healthy deer, even a fawn. If they could, coyotes and wolves would have wiped out the deer a thousand years ago. Only an unhealthy deer or an aged

THE MICHIGAN Audubon Society will observe its 75th anniversary at its annual meeting will be March 23-25 at Oakland Center of Oakland University, Rochester.

On Friday evening, a panel including State Rep. Alice Tomboulis, D-Oakland, will answer pre-submitted questions on land use, wetlands, energy and toxic wastes.

The Auduboners will have a choice of 15 field trips Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. Sixteen concurrent speakers on a variety of scientific and environmental topics will be on tap later Saturday. Topics will range from stinging insects and land reclamation to turtles and uncommon birds.

You don't have to be a member. Contact Jim Hillauer at 338 North Hill Circle, Rochester 48063 for registration information. Send him a stamped, self-addressed, long envelope.

THE SECOND of a four-part series on nature photography will be conducted at the nature center of Stony Creek Metropark, north of Rochester, at 2 p.m. Sunday, March 18.

Leo Lawson, president of Eastpointe Photographic Society, will present "The Many Ways to Go Close Up."



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