

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND FISHERIES AND
WILDLIFE**

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 604

“An Act to Extend the Night Hunting Season for Coyotes to Immediately Following the Muzzle-loading-only Deer Hunting Season”

Presented by Representative DAVIS of East Machias.

Cosponsored by Senator MOORE of Washington and Representatives: ARDELL of Monticello, SCHMERSAL-BURGESS of Mexico, STROUT of Harrington, UNDERWOOD of Presque Isle.

DATE OF HEARING: April 3, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Dan Scott, Colonel for the Maine Warden Service at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to L.D. 604.

This bill extends the night hunting season for hunting coyotes in certain areas of the State by changing the first day of the season, currently December 16th in all counties, to the first Monday following the end of the muzzle-loading-only deer hunting season in each respective wildlife management district.

Coyote hunting is open all year except on Sundays. There is also a special night hunting season for coyotes which is open annually from December 16 – August 31 for persons who possess a coyote night hunting permit (\$4). The night hunting season for coyotes purposefully opens on December 16 so as not to conflict with the prohibition on the use of artificial lights to illuminate wildlife, which is in effect from September 1 – December 15. The prohibition on the use of artificial lights is in place to help combat illegal night hunting for deer in the fall. Illuminating wildlife during this time of year is a class E crime.

In addition to conflicting with the prohibition on the use of artificial lights, starting the coyote night hunting season on the Monday following the end of the muzzleloader deer season would result in different season dates each year and the dates would vary depending on where in the state a person wishes to hunt. The muzzleloader deer season starts the Monday after Thanksgiving and runs for either one or two weeks depending on the wildlife management district. We feel that varying the start of the coyote night hunting season from year to year and in different areas of the state would be unnecessarily confusing for hunters and lead to unintentional violations. Coyotes can currently be hunted more than 300 days per year and more than 200 nights per year. This is one of our most liberal seasons, while avoiding conflicts with other laws which seek to prevent illegal night hunting in the fall.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.