

**John Shivik PhD, Research Biologist
National Wildlife Research Center**

Interviewer—John Howe

John, let's start out just tell me what happened here today with Jeff. What was he doing and why?

John Shivik

One of the studies we were interested in was to try to find out if we can use artificial scent lines to make an artificial territory to repel coyotes from a particular area.

Interviewer—John Howe

Tell me what kind of an animal is a coyote? How would you describe a coyote?

John Shivik

Coyotes are the scrappy survivors that are very clever, very adaptable. They're the type of animals that will live in cities, will live in rural areas, and if there's food and a way to survive—they're going to survive.

Interviewer—John Howe

Why do you think they've become controversial? Especially with livestock circles.

John Shivik

I don't think of coyotes so much as being controversial as being in the midst of things, and as predators they cause damage to our livestock and resources, and for that they're on the radar screen.

Interviewer—John Howe

Tell me what you're learning from your research. What are you learning about coyotes?

John Shivik

One of the most interesting things that I found out by being around so many coyotes for so long is realizing that they're all individuals, realizing that management is not as simple as putting one frightening device out or one repellent, or one method. It's about having a variety of methods and a variety of tools and techniques that we can use to resolve conflicts with really individual coyotes at almost the individual level in very specific places.

Interviewer—John Howe

Tell me about the facility here.

John Shivik

One of the things about this facility is I am incredibly proud of it, and I'm incredibly proud that we've been able to put together a hundred and sixty five acres, room for more than a hundred coyotes, more than fifty four pens and quality animal care staff. We've got research capabilities here that aren't duplicated any place in the entire world. I'm

really pleased that wild life services and national wildlife research centers put this place together, had the wisdom and foresight to create a facility where we can do the research that we're trying to do, and again to resolve conflicts between humans and wildlife and specially by non lethal methods.

Interviewer—John Howe

Tell me about where are coyotes found in the west, and what is their natural history?

John Shivik

Coyotes are found everywhere essentially, coyotes are from South America up to Alaska, and they're in every state now short of Hawaii. Natural history, coyotes are thought to have come from the southwest predominantly, but they've been expanding their ranges for years and years. They're doing quite well these days.

Interviewer—John Howe

What are the greatest threats to coyotes these days, and I'm talking about their habitat and wilderness areas.

John Shivik

I don't think there are any threats to coyotes. Coyotes are survivors, they're adaptable. Coyotes live in the suburbs of Los Angeles; coyote's have shown up in Central Park, New York. If they can survive there, they'll be there.

Interviewer—John Howe

How do ranchers view coyotes and their reputation? Is that reputation deserved, do you think? And I'm talking about, as a predator of livestock.

John Shivik

About the latest numbers I saw, there's about a hundred and eleven million dollars worth of damage to livestock by predators every year. Over sixty percent of that damage is due to coyotes. There are a lot of them. On a per wolf basis, wolves kill more livestock per wolf, but we're talking millions of coyotes throughout the whole US. Coyotes chiefly live on rabbits, mice, rats, watermelons, fruits, vegetables, but they will take lambs, and they will take livestock, and they do. Coyotes are predators, it's their job to kill things, they need to kill things otherwise they will die, but we also need livestock and we need the agriculture too, and our goal and focus is to have them both. We want to have predators, we want to have coyotes around on the landscape, but we also need to protect our pets, we also need to protect our livestock, and that's really our mission here.

Interviewer—John Howe

How do coyotes and wolves interact? I'm thinking of a place like Yellowstone.

John Shivik

The interactions between coyotes and wolves is still something we're researching, is still something we're looking at. If an unwary coyote wanders onto a pack of wolves, the wolves will kill it, but at the same time, we have data where a number of coyotes can

displace a wolf from a carcass. It's not simple, wolves kill coyotes, but wolves by leaving leftover carrion-leftover kills also feed coyotes. So it's like everything in biology, it's not as simple wolves kill remove coyotes, wolves do both, they help them and they hurt them.

Interviewer—John Howe

What do you see for the future of coyotes in the west?

John Shivik

I think coyotes are doing quite well, thank you. In order to impact coyote populations, if you want to remove coyotes from an area, you need to remove more than seventy percent of them for three plus years in a row. We don't have the ability to do that. Coyotes produce five or six pups every year, every pair will produce more than twice as many coyotes to replace themselves. They've got an amazing reproductive potential. There's nothing that we're going to do that's going to lower coyote populations, and nor is anybody trying to reduce coyote populations. What we're trying to do is reduce the conflicts between humans and wildlife, humans and coyotes. The difficulties I see in the future might be more in suburban areas, and when coyotes show up on people's doorsteps. Its one thing when people read or talk about a rancher somewhere losing a sheep, they're sort of divorced of the emotion of it. For that rancher, it's an intense situation; they're losing a bit of their livelihood. They're losing something that they care for. If you're living in the suburbs and then the coyote takes your house cat, you've lost a little bit of something that you care for. And I think those kinds of challenges are going to be the new challenges we're going to face as the interaction between humans and wildlife at that junction. I think that's where we're going to see more conflicts, and that's how the issues are going to change.

Interviewer—John Howe

Is there a war on coyotes in the west?

John Shivik

No, what wildlife services is trying to do is to minimize conflicts between humans and wildlife. The focus is on helping people, the focus is on helping coyotes, and helping predators, we want to have our cake and eat it too. We want wolves, we want bears, we want coyotes, what we're trying to do with a facility like this is come up with management methods, especially non lethal methods so we can have coyotes, and we can have livestock, we can have a cheap available food supply. We're going to manage the problem so we can have it all.

Interviewer—John Howe

Here in the west we're actually pretty lucky to have them.

John Shivik

I guess we're lucky to have predators in general. We have got a wonderful safe and reliable food supply in this country.

Interviewer—John Howe

How would you describe a coyote, just in terms of their personality and character?

John Shivik

Well, as your soundman says, coyote's rock. Coyotes are kind of cool. Coyotes are adaptable, interesting survivors. Coyotes are individuals. Coyotes have outsmarted me every time I've tried to work with them, and design a study to learn about them. Coyotes are that species that's going to be here a long time after I'm here. Coyotes are expanding populations. Again, coyotes are doing quite well, thank you. Coyotes are different from wolves, in the sense that there have been so many around for so long I think people are a little less passionate about them. Wolves are a little more symbolic. Coyotes are that kind of interesting little brother that people tolerate a little bit more.