

Interviewer:

I'm wondering if you could please tell me a story or an experience that you've had with the coyotes in Vermont?

Interviewee:

Um, okay, most recently, last year. Let me think for a second. I think there's actually spring not fall, this past spring. There were lots of coyotes like close where we farm and we did lose a few chickens to them. And one day I came in and was here with the dogs at the barn and around 10am a coyote came, like, down from the back field to was like coming down to scope the chicken yard. We had them out on electric net and my dog took off after it. And the coyote made no effort to stay away as long as the dog was just barking, even though he was, you know, maybe 300 yards away barking at the barn, because he was still like, super intense on this broad daylight bother. And eventually the dog decided he was done doing his work at a distance and took off and he chased it out of the field and away. And I was appreciative because I'd rather not need to shoot it. So I like having a dog that I know knows how to protect the barnyard.

Interviewer:

Wow. And can you explain to me why that story or experience you had was meaningful to you?

Interviewee:

Why was it meaningful? I mean, I guess it just illustrates the quandary of living with them for a farmer. It's quandary, it's not like, I don't feel necessarily automatically entitled to eradicate wildlife because I own a farm (laughter). So, but I'd say like, an animal like that, that, you know, that's much harder for me to protect against because it doesn't follow sort of the ruleset of like, hunting at dusk and things like that, outliers like that, I guess, like I feel less conflicted about getting rid of, but I appreciate when I don't have to.

Interviewer:

That's great, thank you. And I'm hoping to shift a little bit and talk about coyotes more generally. Can you rank your experience of coyotes in Vermont on a scale of one to nine, kind of a funky scale, but with one being negative and nine being positive?

Interviewee:

Um, one to nine...um...I would say 7 and a half.

Interviewer:

And can you explain why you ranked your experience that way?

Interviewee:

(Laughter) It's very random. So you know I think I appreciate not having to deal with millions of rabbits. I like listening to coyotes at night, and I feel like as compared to foxes, they're more respectful of the farm boundaries in general. Like I sort of feel like we have an unwritten understanding. I don't think I have had to have anyone shoot a coyote in the 12 years I've been here even though you hear them at night, and we like, yeah, I feel like they're just generally more respectful of our boundaries. So I like the canine intervention and, you know, I don't necessarily want to be overrun by deer or rabbits or small animals that like farm vegetables and pasture. So I don't know. Maybe it could be 8, actually,

Interviewer:

I mentioned earlier I'm a 4-Her, so I'm really interested in hearing farmers talk about the land that they're farming on and the animals that live on it. And so I'm wondering if you could tell me a story, or talk about an experience or your experience of land, livestock, and coyotes all interacting, and you can think really broadly about interaction, it doesn't have to be one moment it be hard to narrow in on one story, but I'm really interested in hearing about your experience of how those three things—land, livestock and coyotes—all interact.

Interviewee:

Um...how they interact...I don't know really, um, I mean, I think it's important to me to have ways for coyotes and wildlife to migrate through the farm so to not have like huge fence areas that interrupts that, to have lanes if you can and to have, you know, ecosystems that actually allow them to coexist. My neighbor has goats but was not really big on fencing. And his goat fed the population of coyotes here (laughs) for a long time. But I've not lost one. So, I don't know, I think maybe they keep us honest in a way, I think they just they keep integrity in the interface of the system.

Interviewer:

That's so interesting. And why is that interaction or that, that coexistence you speak about meaningful to you?

Interviewee:

Um, you know, I think just because humans tend much more towards taking more than they've earned, you know, like there's a Native American thing that's basically adage about you know take only what's given and I feel like when we expand beyond our ability to farm sustainably, you know, and try to like take over more land, more pastures whatever we need checks in the system to keep us sane because we just are graded limitless.

Interviewer:

In this system and balance that you talk about, what role do you see land playing? Does land, and how you think about land, impact why or how this interaction is meaningful to you. And can you explain to me why or why not?

Interviewee:

Um, say that again.

Interviewer:

Does land and how you think about land impact how or why this system or balance is meaningful to you? And can you explain why or why not?

Interviewee:

I mean, well, yeah, like, part of that equation of like we have an endless appetite for land for our purposes, right? And, I think that we're all better served if we keep balance in our interaction with land, so that you know, the natural ecosystems here can thrive too, not just our own endeavors. Does that make sense?

Interviewer:

Yeah, that's, that's great. And a similar question, but does livestock, in this equation you talk about impact, impact what's meaningful to you in that balance? And can you explain to me why or why not?

Interviewee:

Um, I mean, livestock is a human pursuit for our own purposes. And I think, you know, I think that I wouldn't be here doing this if I didn't think there was, there was room or capacity for it on planet Earth. I just think we have to be cautious about how much of it we engage in and how we engage in it. So, so I you know, I feel like, I don't know, it's a unique relationship between humans and animals that I think serves both, you know, they get to exist in these environments with our protection from predators, but they're here for our purposes as well, and I think that, I think the system works, but not on an infinite scale.

Interviewer:

That's so interesting. And then the final question, and it'll sound familiar, do coyotes impact what was meaningful to you or what is meaningful to you in this coexistence? And can you explain why or why not?

Interviewee:

Yeah, I mean, I think we eradicated wolves from these areas, and they are, they're like an essential component of nature keeps and checks in a way, like, I do think like predators have a really important role to play. And I think that coyotes are sort of the highest predators we have. I mean, there's the rare catamounts and maybe a rare wolf, but I feel like we, we, we need their presence as an indicator that we haven't gone so far off the rails as to screw that up entirely (laughs). We're clearly off the rails some or we'd have more of larger predators, but I think coyotes are sort of the last category of large predator, you know that, that works in community and that are important. That might not have answered the question, I might have gone off track with that one.

Interviewer:

No, no, that was just exactly what we were looking for. And then finally, just some quick background questions. I'm wondering if you could think back to that first story that you talked about? Could you tell me where it took place in Vermont?

Interviewee:

On New Village Farm in Shelburne.

Interviewer:

Awesome. And do you know about what year—I think you answered this earlier—the story took place.

Interviewee:

Say that again, when, oh Spring 2020.

Interviewer:

What kind of things do you do outside whether it's for work or for recreation?

Interviewee:

Hike, farm, and lounge (laughs)

Interviewer:

(Laughs) how long have you lived in Vermont?

Interviewee:

24 years.

Interviewer:

What town do you live in?

Interviewee:

Shelburne.

Interviewer:

What year were you born?

Interviewee:

1970.

Interviewer:

What's your gender?

Interviewee:

Female.

Interviewer:

And then finally, what's your race or ethnicity?

Interviewee:

Caucasian