

PRESS RELEASE  
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## Bill to Provide Better Protection to Wolves in New York

*Senator Hoylman-Sigal and Assembly Member Carroll introduced legislation to require DEC to collect and analyze data about large canids in New York*

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Legislation (S.5402/A.1229A), introduced by Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Assembly Member Robert Carroll, will direct the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to collect data about wild canids (specifically coyotes and wolves) that have specified characteristics that are killed or found in New York State. The data collected will help DEC to identify areas of the state where wolves, a protected endangered species, may be present and will direct DEC to collect important genetic information on coyote and wolf populations in the state. The legislation does not reduce the hunting season or decrease bag limits for hunters and trappers lawfully killing coyotes or other game animals in New York State.

**Senator Hoylman-Sigal said** “Wolves are protected as an endangered species under both New York State and Federal law. Despite that, hunters and trappers too often mistake wolves for coyotes, due to their similar appearance, and kill them anyway. In order to ensure these precious creatures do not go extinct, we need to strengthen the protections for wolves under New York State law. We can do that by passing our bill ([S.5402A](#)) to require the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to collect genetic data about large canids killed by hunters and trappers in New York. The data collected will help the Department of Environmental Conservation identify areas of the state where wolves may be present and keep the department, and the public, informed about where more precautions and restrictions are needed to protect these endangered animals.”

“This legislation will facilitate the Department of Environmental Conservation putting in place protocols for the identification and protection of wolves in New York State thereby helping to foster biodiversity and a healthy ecosystem. The amended version of the bill is designed to make it easier for hunters to work collaboratively with DEC” **said Assemblymember Robert Carroll.**

“Wolves are a protected species in New York and across the country, but that protection means little if illegal killings continue unchecked,” **said Senator Pete Harckham.** “Requiring the DEC

to collect DNA samples from large canids that are killed will give us critical data on wolf presence in New York. With better information, we can strengthen conservation efforts and prevent the unlawful killing of these vital, ecologically important animals. Thank you to my colleague Senator Hoylman-Sigal for his leadership on this critical issue.”

Wolves, a species protected under both state and federal law, once roamed widely throughout New York but were driven to extinction in the early 1900s due to deliberate extermination. As apex predators, wolves play a critical ecological role in maintaining balanced and healthy ecosystems. Given adequate protections, they are capable of traveling hundreds of miles to reclaim their historic range. In recent decades, wolves have sporadically migrated into New York and other northeastern states. However, because of their similar appearance to large eastern coyotes, wolves are often misidentified and mistakenly killed by hunters and trappers. This bill takes an essential first step to prevent such accidental killings by requiring additional hunter/trapper training and requiring the collection of genetic samples from large wild canids, helping scientists and wildlife managers understand wolf presence in New York.

The legislation requires hunters and trappers to report to DEC canids killed, as required for numerous other species, to collect key information on the characteristics of animals killed, number of animals killed, and location data. Canids that weigh greater than 50 pounds will be subjected to DNA analysis by DEC to determine the genetic ancestry of the animal. If DNA analysis shows that the animal is a wolf, DEC will determine where the wolf was killed and may take additional protective measures, consistent with its existing authority to protect endangered species, to protect any other wolves in the area where the wolf was located.

DEC will also be required to provide information on wild canids to the public including any DNA test results of wild canids. DEC will also be required to update its hunting and trapping educational materials to provide hunters and trappers with information on the legal status for wolves, and how to distinguish a wolf from a coyote in the field. DEC will also be required to submit a report on the status of wolves in New York State.

“DEC, the Legislature and the public need sound scientific data for making policy and management decisions now and into the future. This common-sense legislation will yield important genetic data on wild canids in the State and will afford wolves a stronger chance to survive and re-establish themselves in their former home territory within New York State,” **said Claudia Braymer, Executive Director, Protect the Adirondacks.**

“Wolves, apex predators that play an important role in maintaining a biologically diverse ecosystem, are naturally returning to the Northeast. Legislation requiring the collection of genetic samples from large wild canids will help scientists better understand their presence in New York, which will ultimately help us better protect them as they return to the region they once called home,” **said Elizabeth Ahearn, Conservation Associate, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter.**

“The return of wolves to New York is a tremendously hopeful sign for the state's environment. DEC is tasked with ensuring sound, science-based wildlife management and needs to put the pieces in place to monitor and protect wolves, which are protected under federal and state law. This bill extends the agency's responsibility to wild canids while giving wolves a fighting chance for recovery in New York and across the Northeast,” **said Nadia Steinzor, Northeast Carnivore Advocate, the Rewilding Institute.**

“All canids, including wolves and coyotes, are valued members of healthy ecosystems. Every documented case of wolves in the Northeast since their extirpation is most likely only a fraction of the wolves actually present. By requiring the DNA testing of canids in New York, we’re laying a foundation to better understand and protect the wildlife that call our state home,” **said Regan Downey, Director of Education, Wolf Conservation Center.**

“This legislation strategically advances New York’s understanding and conservation of its wildlife, in particular its wild canids. The bill helps the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation carry out DEC’s stated goals of distinguishing coyotes from wolves and of advising conservationists and hunters of these distinguishing characteristics. It also materially assists NYS DEC in its legislated mandate to conserve all wild canids and to protect endangered species including wolves,” **said Dave Gibson, managing partner, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve.**

“The return of wolves to New York is a story of hope and this bill aims to give that story a happy ending,” **said Tala DiBenedetto, a New York-based staff attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity.** “The straightforward measures in the legislation will help ensure dispersing wolves have the protections they need to safely reestablish in New York, and it’s an excellent model for other states in the region. Wolves once ranged across the entire Northeast and fortunately there’s still plenty of good habitat here to welcome them home.”

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