

**COYOTE DISTRIBUTION IN FLORIDA EXTENDS SOUTHWARD**M. B. MAIN, S. F. COATES,<sup>1</sup> AND G. M. ALLEN*Southwest Florida Research and Education Center**Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, University of Florida, IFAS  
2686 State Rd. 29 North, Immokalee, Florida 34142*

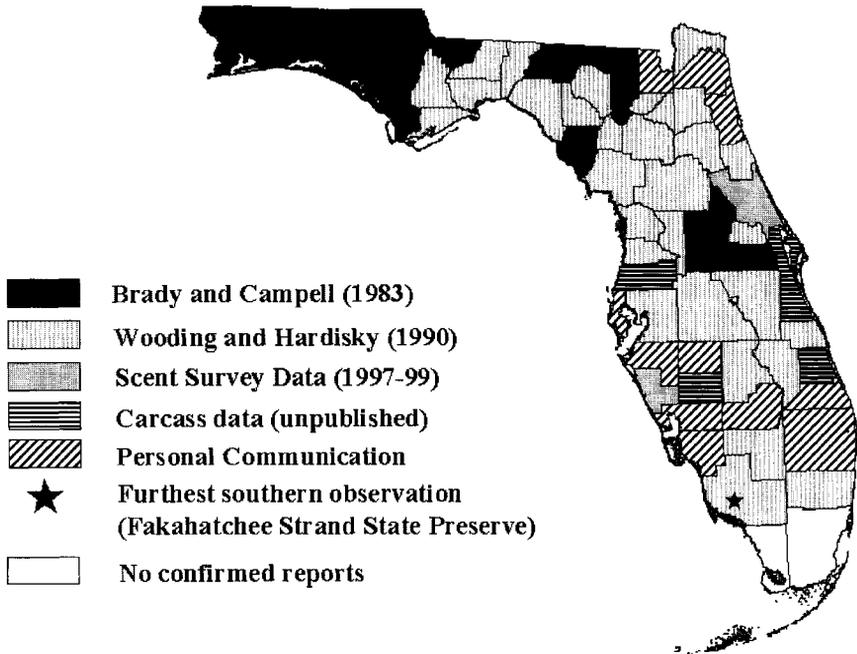
The presence of the coyote (*Canis latrans*) has been confirmed in 65 of Florida's 67 counties (Fig. 1). Florida's two southernmost counties, Dade and Monroe, were the only counties in the state where no confirmed sightings of coyotes have as yet been documented (T. Regan, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, pers. comm., 2000; S. Bass, Everglades National Park, pers. comm., 2000). The southernmost confirmed observation of coyotes in Florida was provided from a carcass collected on the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve (M. Owens, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, pers. comm., 1998; Fig. 1).

Coyotes have increased their range throughout Florida during the last 30-40 years. Range expansion of coyotes from Alabama and southern Georgia resulted in confirmed reports of coyotes in northern Florida during the 1960's and established populations were documented in the Panhandle and northern region of the state by the late 1970's (Layne 1994). Since then coyotes have extended their range southward into peninsular Florida. Although several intentional introductions of small numbers of coyotes by hunting groups were documented (Layne 1994), it is unclear how important these introductions were to the spread of coyotes throughout the state. Assuming the increase of coyotes in Florida resulted primarily from a natural range expansion southward into Florida during the 1960's, widespread establishment of coyotes throughout Florida took roughly 30 years, with the rate of spread increasing rapidly during the last decade.

A systematic approach to determining coyote distribution in Florida was initiated by Brady and Campbell (1983), who documented the coyote in 18 counties via a mail survey, primarily in the Panhandle (Fig. 1). Wooding and Hardisky (1990) conducted a similar survey and reported the presence of coyotes in 31 additional counties (Fig. 1). A survey for coyote sign conducted in four southern Florida counties indicated coyotes were becoming well established in southern Florida by the mid-1990's (Maehr et al. 1996). During 1997 an annual scent (track) station survey was initiated at over 30 locations located primarily in south-central Florida in an effort to further document and monitor the continued expansion of coyote populations (Main et al. 1999). Additional documentation of the distribution of coyotes in Florida was obtained during 1997-98 from carcasses collected throughout the state by ranchers, University of Florida Cooperative Extension Agents, and others for a pathogen and parasite study being conducted in cooperation with the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine (Main and Coates 2000). The presence of coyotes in Lee County in southwest Florida was confirmed by personal observation (M. Main pers. obs., 1998). We contacted biologists from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and inquired as to whether they could reliably confirm the presence of coyotes in counties from which we had no confirmed reports. In this manner we confirmed the presence of coyotes in the northeastern counties of Baker and Duval (J. Norment, FWC, pers. comm., 2000), St. John's and Volusia counties in central Florida (D. Coyner, FWC, pers. comm., 2000), Pinellas,

---

<sup>1</sup>Current address: Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, 303 Newins-Zeigler Box 110430, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611.



**Figure 1. Distribution of coyotes in Florida based on published surveys, reports, and unpublished data, including personal communication (see text for description of sources).**

Glades, and Hardee counties in south-central Florida (J. McGrady, FWC, pers. comm., 2000), and St. Lucie, Martin, and Palm Beach counties in southeastern Florida (T. Regan, FWC, pers. comm., 2000). We combined information from all sources and composed a new distribution map portraying range expansion of the coyote throughout Florida (Fig. 1). These data indicate coyotes are established throughout the state and that range expansion of coyotes throughout Florida took approximately three decades.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.**—We thank D. Coyner, J. McGrady, J. Norment, and T. Regan (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission), S. Bass (Everglades National Park), and M. Owens (Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve) for providing information on the distribution of coyotes in Florida. This paper is a contribution (Journal Series No. R-07573) of the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- BRADY, J. R. AND H. W. CAMPBELL. 1983. Distribution of coyotes in Florida. *Florida Field Naturalist* 11:40-41.
- LAYNE, J. N. 1994. Non-indigenous mammals in Florida. Pages 79-95, *in* An assessment of invasive non-indigenous species in Florida's public lands (D. Schmitz and T. Brown, Eds.). Florida Department of Environmental Protection Technical Report No. TSS-94-100, Tallahassee.
- MAEHR, D. S., R. T. MCBRIDE, AND J. M. MULLAHEY. 1996. Status of coyotes in south Florida. *Florida Field Naturalist* 24:101-107.

- MAIN, M. B., AND S. F. COATES. 2000. Monitoring coyote populations in Florida: results of the 1997-1999 scent station surveys with summary information from other coyote research in Florida. University of Florida Southwest Florida Research and Education Center, Report No. SWFREC-IMM-2000-01, Immokalee, Florida.
- \_\_\_\_\_, P. B. WALSH, K. M. PORTIER, AND S. F. COATES. 1999. Monitoring the expanding range of coyotes in Florida: results of the 1997-98 statewide scent station surveys. *Florida Field Naturalist* 27:150-162.
- WOODING, J. B. AND T. S. HARDISKY. 1990. Coyote distribution in Florida. *Florida Field Naturalist* 18:12-14.

#### CHANGE OF EDITOR

Effective with this notice, all manuscripts submitted for possible publication in the *Florida Field Naturalist* shall be sent to: Dr. Jerome Jackson, Professor, Whitaker Center, College of Arts and Science, Florida Gulf Coast University, 10501 Florida Gulf Coast University Boulevard South, Fort Myers, Florida 33965-6565; Ph: (941) 590-7193; FAX: (941) 590-7200; E-mail: JJACKSON@FGCU.EDU.