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## Book Review - Coyote Settles the South

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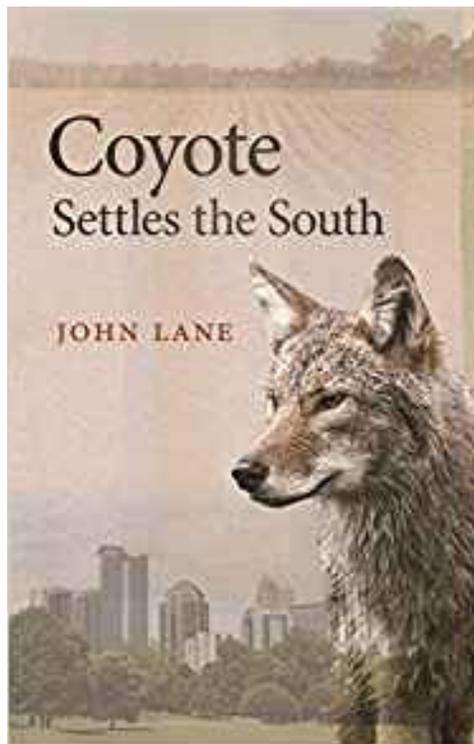
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## Off the SHELF

**Coyote Settles the South** by John Lane  
(University of Georgia Press, 2016: ISBN  
9780820349282, \$29.95)

Often the subject of myth and folklore and fiction, sometimes the object of fear or derision, coyotes are controversial and perhaps misunderstood creatures. One thing about them is undeniable and certain. They are here among us, their habitats ranging over almost all of North America. And they are here in the Southeast, among the mountain residents of North Georgia and among the suburbanites of Metro Atlanta. John Lane's *Coyote Settles the South* makes that fact immediately clear.

Lane, author of several nature-related nonfiction titles such as *Waist Deep in Black Water* and *My Paddle to the Sea* as well as several volumes of poetry, works as a professor of English and English and Environmental Studies at Wofford College. After hearing their haunting and resonant cries for the first time (on a Halloween evening, no less) while standing on the back deck of his house in South Carolina, Lane became fascinated with these canidae. He described their calls, "They rang high, quivering cries strung through space like a clef of ascending notes held too long, a little lonely but with a strange beauty." Lane is a keen observer of nature who knows the language of a naturalist but often expresses it through the diction of a poet.



The author's research takes him from his backyard to several locations throughout the Southeast: Spartanburg and Greenville in South Carolina, Nag's Head and Kings County in North Carolina, and Druid Hills in suburban Atlanta. He visits areas that are geographically diverse—a nature preserve, a swamp, a tannery, old farmlands, and city streets. He interviews people whose lives and careers intersect with coyotes in some way—biologists, trappers, hunters, and distraught pet owners. And he meets a "coyote hugger" named Scooter who has the only captive coyote in Lane's home state kept for educational purposes.

*Coyote Settles the South* is highly narrative, replete with personal stories and historical accounts of human encounters with coyotes. Lane's writing is thoughtful and well-researched, and through it he expresses an awe and reverence. In chapter three he said, "Wonder is not a disease, Alan Watts reminded us. I want to express the wonder I feel for coyotes, the wonder that they have survived, that they have prospered, that they will somehow be with us now forever unless somehow they are wiped out by some pathogen."

Lane would likely disapprove of several recently launched coyote population control programs. In spring 2017 the Georgia Department of Natural Resources announced the Georgia Coyote Challenge. Each coyote killed, up to five per month per hunter, makes the hunter

eligible for a monthly drawing of a lifetime hunting and fishing license. Lane's home state, South Carolina, also implemented a similar program in 2016, despite the fact that the governor vetoed the legislation.

The Atlanta Coyote Project (<https://atlantacoyoteproject.org/>) was founded by scientists at Berry College, Emory University, and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. The group conducts peer-reviewed research, and collects and disseminates information about the biology and natural history of coyotes to the general public. This nonprofit argues that it is a futile quest to eliminate or greatly reduce the coyote population, but rather it is more effective to educate citizens how to co-exist with these non-

native residents who are here to stay. The project website also features an interactive form where people can input information about a coyote sighting.

Readers who want to learn more about coyotes in the Southeast will enjoy John Lane's excellent *Coyote Settles the South*. Readers who want to learn more about the myth and folklore of coyotes as well as their habitats beyond the South may enjoy Dan Folres's *Coyote America: A Natural and Supernatural History* (Basic Books, 2016).

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