

Jay B C  
C

What is the relationship between predators and environmental health?

Environmental health might equate to proper balance of man, wildlife and their habitats. Proper balance would be that population numbers of consumer organism i.e., man/wildlife, is at a level whereby they do not delete or adversely affect the habitat they depend upon. This habitat is the space, air, water, vegetation and cover upon which they depend.

Predators are an integral part of life relationships on earth. They are, for the most parts, at the higher levels of the food chain or at the apex of the pyramid of complexity of organisms. Man ~~often~~ <sup>often, often</sup> believes that certain predators compete with him for space or ~~natural~~ resources. The grizzly was once wide ranging but man's advance on the most useable lands has pushed the grizzly back into remote areas lightly used by man. Late in the nineteenth and early in the twenieth century man had ~~dismantled~~ <sup>destroyed</sup> many of the west's big game populations. These were the food sources for our larger predators. Man replaced big game with livestock on the ranges and forests. Man unwittingly subsituted his livestock for the natural wildlife food base for these predators. Consequently, the grizzly, wolf, coyote, cougar and fox were termed bad animals and man decreed that they should be destroyed.

The natural or proper balance had been upset. Man's presence is certain; this will not change. Hopefully we have, and are, learning. The balance will never be fully restored. But we are becoming more aware of the value of natural systems and their importance to man's health. <sup>I believe we</sup> Efforts will continue to seek a level where predators and man can co-exist in a healthy environment which we share.