

Coyote Study Underway At Lava Beds Monument

By Suzanne Shoemaker

Local ranchers have long contended that Northern California's Lava Beds National Monument (LBE) and adjacent Tulelake National Wildlife Refuge (TLNWR) protect and harbor coyotes responsible for livestock depredation on surrounding lands. Similar claims are made concerning other wildlife sanctuaries in the western United States. Based on current knowledge, management personnel can neither confirm nor deny these claims.

A radio-telemetry study currently is underway to investigate daily and seasonal movement patterns of a protected population of coyotes on LBE and

TLNWR, in particular, to learn if these coyotes make regular excursions off the protected area.

Food habits of coyotes on undisturbed rangeland (LBE) are being compared with those on irrigated cropland (TLNWR) by scat analysis. A concurrent study of the relative abundances of small mammal prey in representative habitat types will aid in determining coyote food preferences.

It is hoped this information will shed light on the extent to which land use practices have altered coyote movements and food habits on the study area.

Shoemaker is a graduate student working with David de Calesta, associate professor of Fish and Wildlife at Oregon State University.



Burying the trap for coyotes at Lava Beds National Monument are Dave deCalesta, left, and Graduate Assistant Gary Whitmer. Jaws of the trap are padded to prevent injury to the coyote, and a bag of tranquilizer is attached. Chewing the bag calms the animal and makes it less likely to injure itself while it awaits tagging and release.