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"OLD THREE TOES" TURNS THEM UP

Super-Coyote of Caddo County, Okla.,  
Trapped by Government Hunter.

Old Three Toes and his co-killers were a hard-boiled lot, whelped in a region where the length of a coyote's life depended a good deal upon the length of his legs and on the same dimension in his head. They belonged to a superior breed, developed by the very methods that had been designed for their undoing, and Old Three Toes was the strongest, fleetest, and wisest of the clan. For six years he spread destruction among the herds and flocks in an 12-mile area in Caddo County, Okla., outwitting packs of expensive dogs that killed off his slower and weaker relatives. Only the fittest survived. The weaklings and dullards were culled before they had the opportunity to reproduce their inferiority.

But if these super-coyotes could survive in the face of ordinary methods of extermination, life was a different matter when they were called upon to face the skill and persistence of Government hunters. If you would know what happened to this band of destroyers and to the greatest of them all, read a few paragraphs from two reports sent in to the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture by E. F. Pope, predatory animal inspector for the Oklahoma-Arkansas district. In December the inspector wrote:

"Inasmuch as the people of the Lookaba community have sustained losses from coyotes amounting to many thousands of dollars, and, after spending \$1,000 for a pack of stag hounds, have failed to bring the animals under control, this promises to be an excellent opportunity for demonstrating the proper methods. However, on account of a super-abundance of dogs in the locality, many of which are still referred to as 'valuable dogs,' we must confine ourselves to the use of traps.

"After looking over the largest pasture in the neighborhood, where coyotes were said to have committed depredations for the last

six years or more, I concluded that coyotes were not unusually abundant but their tracks were unusually large and indicated that most of them were large, heavy animals. In fact, the people there state that all the slower, weaker specimens have been caught with dogs and that the survivors are all large, rangy animals and that a race of super-coyotes is being produced in Caddo County. We heard much of Old Three Toes, an extra large coyote or wolf, that has been chased with dogs for the past six years. We were not looking especially for his tracks, but the first tracks we found were rather large, even for a very large coyote, measuring 3-3/4 inches long and 2-1/4 inches wide, with one toe missing from the right fore foot. In shape they were typical coyote tracks. We found the same tracks in three different parts of the pasture, two or three miles apart. As there are some very rough, heavily timbered canyons there, Old Three Toes may prove to be a wolf or a coyote-dog hybrid.

"At this writing there are probably 50 traps awaiting the return of the super-coyote, or whatever he is, and we expect to hear of his capture any day."

What the coyote hunters accomplished was detailed in the January report, which says in part:

"Twenty-nine days of strenuous activity were devoted to the Caddo County project, which resulted in a total bag of 19 coyotes, practically all of them large, rangy old sinners that had outrun the dogs, refused to be enticed with bait, and committed depredations against live stock to the extent of at least \$10,000.

"In our narrative for December reference was made to Old Three Toes, notorious over the whole county. The following letter from Mr. Mullins, his captor, fully justifies the prediction of his speedy downfall:

"It is too bad that you could not have stayed another day and had a good look at Old Three Toes, who hit the two traps with the short stakes we set together. The very last night he roamed the woods was the night you left. He was not a wolf or coyote-dog hybrid as had been rumored, but an extra large coyote, as was indicated by his tracks. We did not weigh him until Saturday evening, when we took him to town to give the people a chance to see him; that is, the few who had not heard of his capture and come to our camp. There has been a crowd here ever since he was caught, one person coming 17 miles. Five days after his capture Old Three Toes weighed exactly 39 pounds, which means that he must have weighed at least 45 pounds when caught. There is no doubt in the minds of the people here that he is the offender they have been chasing all over the county for the past six years."