

# Book Review

by Jakki Harbolick

## ***Wolves: Behavior, Ecology and Conservation***

**L. David Mech and Luigi Boitani, editors  
University of Chicago Press, 2003**

Anyone even remotely interested in wolf ecology, environmental science or conservation dynamics will discover the ultimate resource in the eagerly anticipated *Wolves: Behavior, Ecology and Conservation*. Edited by legendary biologists L. David Mech and Luigi Boitani, this newest work is the defining compilation of more than forty years of meticulous research. In a collaborative effort, twenty of the leading specialists in the field of wolf study share the authorial responsibilities with Mech and Boitani. The result is an unprecedented scientific analysis of the wolf that could serve as the model for any ethological investigation.

Sounding a bit dry? It's not. In fact, *Wolves* is extraordinarily engaging. Although different authors have

written each chapter, the overall style is consistent, smooth and utterly down-to-earth. The material is thoughtfully organized, making for ease of use. The introduction, for example, contains a preliminary synopsis of each chapter and shows how each one relates to the others.

Laypersons will be pleased to find that concepts are explained and given meaning within the greater context, thereby weaving, through science, a tapestry of incredibly detailed information that really is more than the sum of its parts. Certainly, much of the data is highly technical, but the book will appeal to both the general public and the scientific community because the complexities are balanced by clear explanations, occasional anecdotal accounts and detailed graphics in the form of photography, illustrations, graphs and charts.

Mech and Boitani have made unvarnished objectivity a significant part of their mission. Researchers, scientists, naturalists, students, conservationists, wolf enthusiasts,



agriculturists and even individuals harboring anti-wolf sentiment will be able to respect and use this work because of its scope and integrity.

For some, these might be the laurels upon which to rest, but beyond culminating years of work, this incredible book represents a jumping off point for all the work that will follow. The authors provide insight and answers, reference nearly 2,000 sources of further information, and still acknowledge the many questions that remain and the need for continued study and investigation. What needs to be done next? Responsible, balanced conservation, providing for wolves and humans alike, tops the list. The authors "hope [to] promote a much better understanding of the wolf and foster ecologically sound wolf management. Together, research, public understanding, and proper management should help minimize the inevitable conflicts between wolves and humans and better the chances for wolf conservation worldwide." ■

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*Wolves: Behavior, Ecology and Conservation will be released late this year. After its release, the book can be purchased at the International Wolf Center's store online at [www.wolf.org](http://www.wolf.org).*