

Wolves in Print Media: Information or Misinformation?

by Norm Bishop, International Wolf Center
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Many Americans use the popular media as their primary source of information about wolves. Unfortunately, what they get is often misinformation. Printed media such as national sportsmen's and livestock growers' publications and local newspapers in wolf country often spout what I call "barstool biology" to support their declarations and proposals against wolves and their recovery in the northern Rocky Mountains.

A popular theme among these writers is that wolves are a danger to people, especially children. Another is that as wolves return to the Rocky Mountain states, they will destroy elk and other game populations in unspeakably cruel and wasteful ways, and then turn to cattle and sheep, putting outfitters and ranchers out of business. They believe that anyone who appreciates wolves or supports their recovery is an eco-terrorist or bunny hugger who doesn't know the true destructive nature of wolves, hates hunters and hunting, and would take away the firearms used by hunters to feed their families.

Anti-wolf authors who spout "barstool biology" in printed media to support their opposition to wolves and their recovery provide golden opportunities to correct the record or clarify a misstated concept.

By misstating or misusing facts, anti-wolf authors provide golden opportunities to correct the record or clarify a misstated concept. I respond to misinformation published in the regional media through editorials and letters to the editor using credible, scientific sources. I avoid derogatory labels and keep my responses factual. I don't take on the emotional aspects

of articles by anti-wolf writers. The wolf literature and data compiled both before and since the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone and central Idaho—reports to Congress, environmental impact statements, annual reports and many scientific publications—help to refute the modern mythmakers and provide solid footing for correcting misinformation.

Norman A. Bishop was the principal interpreter of wolves and their recovery in Yellowstone National Park from 1985 to 1997. Since his retirement, he has continued to educate people about wolves.



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