

# Educational Messages

## What Should We Teach About Wolves?

**W**olf education encompasses an enormous number of topics, only a portion of which can be included in time-limited educational programs. The International Wolf Center has developed a list of priority learning objectives to ensure that all students learn the basics about a few key topics. Complementary emotional and behavioral objectives outline the way we would like our students to feel and behave as a result of our educational programming.

This reference guide was developed by the International Wolf Center education staff and board education committee in collaboration with teachers, researchers and other education experts. Given limited time and resources, wolf educators may wish to select subsets of these points to create meaningful learning experiences for their audiences. Keep these objectives handy, and refer to them when designing activities for various audiences.

### Recommended Learning Objectives

Students should *know*...

- **the wolf's natural history**

*Adaptations:* Wolves possess an array of physical and behavioral adaptations that help them survive in a variety of habitats.

*Behavior:* Wolves are social animals with distinctive behavior patterns.

*Distribution:* Wolves historically inhabited much of the northern hemisphere but today inhabit some two-thirds of their former range. In the 48 states where most wolves were eradicated wolf populations are recovering in several areas.

- **the wolf's place in the ecosystem**

*Habitat needs:* Wolves can live in a wide variety of habitats; their primary requirements are a sufficient prey base and tolerance by humans.

*Relationships with other species:* Several species are closely affected by wolves, especially prey, scavengers and other carnivores.

*Relationship to wild lands:* Wolves conflict less with humans in wild lands; large-scale biological corridors and networks of interconnected preserves are most effective for wolf conservation.

- **the nature of the wolf's interactions with humans**

*Cultural:* Cultural values color how humans understand, value and treat wolves; wolves are viewed differently in different cultural traditions.

*Geographic:* Conflicts often arise in areas where wolves and humans both live; habitat fragmentation and loss are causing ideal wolf habitat (wild lands) to disappear.

*Historical:* Intentional poisoning and eradication efforts caused the wolf population to drop in many parts of the world; both wolf range

and population numbers were significantly affected by humans.

*Economic:* Economic realities affect human decision-making about wolves; wolves affect human economic realities mainly through predation on livestock, pets and game animals.

*Political/social:* Wolf survival depends on political decision-making processes; wolf issues magnify existing political and social issues. As wolf populations increase in the United States, federal protection will be lifted and management returned to the states, raising new questions about population sustainability, habitat, conflict with humans, and the nature of recovery.

### Recommended Emotional Objectives

Students should *feel*...

- informed about wolves, their environment and their relationship to humans;
- inspired to learn more about wolves and wild lands;
- awed by the complexity of the environment;
- respect for the wolf as a wild animal and for its place in the environment;
- optimistic about coexistence between wolves and humans;
- reassured that the wolf is rarely a threat to human safety.

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# Educator Workshops

## What Should We Teach About Wolves?

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### Recommended Behavioral Objectives

Students should *act* by...

- learning more about wolves and their relationship to wild lands;
- communicating about wolves and their relationship to wild lands;
- building conflict-resolution skills to objectively participate in the survival of wolf populations and wild lands;
- taking a broader interest in environmental issues;
- using talents, resources and skills to support agencies and organizations whose activities align with their values.

A balanced approach to wolf education ideally creates students who develop a deep understanding of both the biological and social dimensions of the wolf's life and future. Audiences will come to believe that as individuals and collectively, they are responsible for helping to ensure long-term survival of wolf populations and wild lands. By modeling respect for diverse opinions and voices, objective education portrays the wolf as a salient, intriguing animal, neither good nor bad. Because we cannot fully understand wolves without understanding their role in the environment, wolf education must address the preservation of wild lands as an important component to wolf survival. ■

[www.wolf.org](http://www.wolf.org)

*the world's best  
resource for  
wolf information*

**W**olves engage learners of all levels like few other subjects can. The International Wolf Center's *Gray Wolves, Gray Matter* workshops help classroom teachers, naturalists, curriculum specialists and youth leaders gain new knowledge, skills and resources for teaching about wolves effectively and objectively.

In a recent workshop, for example, the International Wolf Center partnered with the Leopold Education Project to offer three days of curriculum training, wolf experiences and reflections on the classic writings of Aldo Leopold. The workshop was sponsored by the Kenosha Chapter of Pheasant's Forever with a generous donation.

*Gray Wolves, Gray Matter* workshops focus on teaching ideas and background information for presenting wolf management controversies to students in grades 6 through 12. The workshop materials help teachers develop their students' understanding of stakeholder perspectives, the ecological impacts of wolf recovery and the role of human values in public policy decision making. Participants experience a variety of teaching techniques as well as opportunities for discussion and reflection. Graduate credits are usually available, too!

Workshops are being scheduled around the country. Sign up for our *Rendezvous e-Newsletter* for educators to receive the latest updates on workshops and teacher resources: [http://www.wolf.org/wolves/learn/educator/edu\\_main.asp](http://www.wolf.org/wolves/learn/educator/edu_main.asp). ■



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Janine Newhouse



## Will the Real Wolf Please Stand Up?

### Overview:

Students examine their perceptions, thoughts and feelings about wolves and the origins of their knowledge about wolves.

### Directions:

Have students draw a picture of a wolf in the center of a sheet of paper. Say the word "wolf," and give students three to five minutes to write any words or phrases that come to mind. Discuss with students the meanings of the words *fact*, *fiction* and *opinion*. Have students divide another sheet of paper into three columns headed by these words. Ask them to place their "brainstorm" words in one of these three categories. Students then total the responses in each category to get an idea of the basis of their knowledge and beliefs about wolves. Divide the class into groups, or "packs," to discuss their concept maps and compare them. Discuss the

basis of personal beliefs and how they influence our perception of information as fact or fiction.

### Discuss:

On what do we base our beliefs and perceptions? How might knowledge and the acquisition of information change someone's beliefs? Can you think of some once firmly held beliefs that have been proven wrong?



## Two new additions to the Mexican Wolf population!



On May 13, 2004, Mexican wolf pups were born at the Minnesota Zoo. This is the second year in a row the Minnesota Zoo has had successful breeding of this endangered

species. The pups have joined their parents and seven brothers and sisters (last year's litter) in the exhibit, making for exciting viewing. Be sure to stop by the Wolf Gazebo on the Northern Trail next time you visit the Minnesota Zoo!

## Join us for Autumn Howl at the Minnesota Zoo October 21-24, 2004 • 9-4 daily

Learn about the Zoo's conservation efforts with the Mexican Wolf Program. Talk to the Zoo keepers who care for the wolves. Costumed characters from the International Wolf Center and other kids' activities make this a fun, educational event for all ages.

For more information about Autumn Howl, Family Zoo Adventure classes and event schedules, please visit us at [www.mnzoo.org](http://www.mnzoo.org) or call 952.431.9200.



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