

How does the presence of

Tom Smylie, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Voices of the Southwest

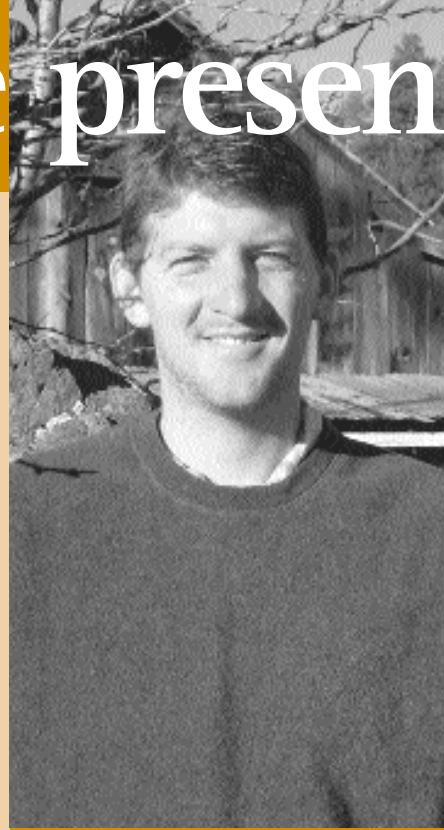
Wolf. Savage and treacherous. Evil incarnate. Hated and feared.

Wolf. Noble and majestic. Symbol of wild nature. Revered and adored.

Wolf. Fascinating and intelligent. Remarkable predator. Respected and valued.

Different wolves for different people. Our personal perceptions depend to some degree on our age, where we live and what kind of work we do.

International Wolf asked seven people in the Southwest to answer the question, “How does the presence of wolves affect your life?” The word *presence*, we said, should be loosely interpreted. It might mean that wolves live nearby, close to homes or ranches. It could mean the presence of wolves in one’s thoughts and imagination. Or the word might suggest an encounter of some sort—seeing a wolf or hearing wolves howl. The seven people whom we chose—a hunter, a wolf advocate, an animal rights activist, a wildlife agency official, a wildlife biologist, a conservationist, a small-town resident—are not, of course, fully representative of the broad spectrum of people living in the Southwest. But each perspective is interesting and illuminating. And each has something to teach us, both about wolves and about ourselves.



Becky Schwartz

Ethan Aumack

Director of Restoration Programs for the Grand Canyon Trust

“ I first encountered a wolf face to face in the wild just after dusk on a small island off the central coast of British Columbia. I had viewed wolves from a distance and had most definitely felt their howls throughout my travels, but I had not yet had one stare me down. As we peered out with wide eyes from our tent, the wolf walked slowly and deliberately through our camp, and I felt a sense of shared dignity, solemn remembrance and responsibility. Her very presence brought dignity to the wildness surrounding us.

As the wolf faded into the marsh surrounding our campsite, and her presence forever etched itself into my consciousness, I couldn’t help but remember the gruesome stories of wolf eradication in the Southwest, my home. As I have more recently entered into discussions about wolf reintroduction in the Southwest, I feel a distinct sense of responsibility — responsibility to act as the wolf in British Columbia seemed to, with an unflinching gaze, a strength in purpose and a powerful stride. As long as I live, I will remember my encounter in British Columbia as if it were yesterday and cherish lessons learned that day as if timeless. ”

wolves affect your life?



Chris Rennie

Bobbie Holaday

Director, Preserve Arizona's Wolves (P.A.Ws), 1988–98.

“In 1988 I founded Preserve Arizona's Wolves (P.A.WS.) after learning the plight of the Mexican wolf. Dedicated P.A.WS.' members spearheaded Arizona's support for efforts by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Arizona Game and Fish Department to return the Mexican wolf to historic habitat in the Blue Range area of Arizona and New Mexico. I witnessed this happening in January 1998 when I helped carry one of three crates bearing wolves to an acclimation pen. For the first time in 50 years, Mexican wolves set foot in the Apache National Forest.

Although I camped in Alpine, Arizona, every summer after Mexican wolves were released, nearly five years went by before I saw one running free. Early one August morning in 2002, with the dew still glistening on the tall grass, I was walking with my dog, Blizzard, from our campsite at Luna Lake toward the lakeshore. Suddenly Blizzard stopped short. He didn't bark, but I could see the hackles on his back go straight up as he stared at the meadow that bordered the lake. I looked to see what he was focused on and suddenly saw it. A lone canine was sauntering across the meadow. I knew from his size, shape and coloring, the way his tail extended back from his body, and his stride that this was no dog but was one of the resident Mexican wolves. I can't express the thrill I felt standing there some hundred yards from the wolf, which had not spotted us. Although we did not move, he became aware of our presence, and his gait broke into a run as he dashed into the woods. While wolf howls previously had awakened me from sleep several times in the very early morning, this was my first actual sighting. It made worthwhile those 11 years I had devoted to helping bring the Mexican wolf back to the Blue. ”



Dink Robart

Goat rancher near Alpine, Arizona

“I come from a ranching family. I try to look after my neighbors and friends, and they do the same. It used to be that most people here made their living ranching and logging, but not anymore. We depend more on tourism now. For one thing, grazing permits have been cut back.

There are not as many cattle as there used to be, so wolves have not impacted us as much as we thought they might. We have not had a problem here on our ranch, but we keep the goats we raise pretty much penned up. The truth is, the real predators in our life are not wolves but politicians. The wolf is a helpless animal caught up in the scheme of the political system, a system that is characterized by arrogance and deceit.

An example is the way the reintroduction was carried out. First there were rallies for and against the wolf. I was opposed to bringing the wolf back, and I sponsored a public demonstration. Then the public scoping began with the meetings where we were encouraged to voice our opinions. But the reintroduction was mandated by law—we discovered our opinions really didn't matter. So I have divested myself of involvement in politics altogether. I am sick of politics. The wolf program was for me the straw that broke the camel's back. ”

How does the presence of



Stephanie Coleman

John Oakleaf

Mexican Wolf Field Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

“Wolves are fascinating study animals that are unique in both the passion they invoke and many facets of their behavior. Wolves are keystone species that influence the environment from the top down. Like many others fortunate enough to be engaged in the study of wolves, I am fascinated by predator-prey relationships and how the reintroduction of wolves influences prey behavior, movements and numbers.

These questions are particularly intriguing in the southwestern United States, where virtually nothing is known regarding wolf-prey dynamics. In contrast with the more studied populations of wolves to the north, reintroduced Mexican wolves occur in an area where snow is more ephemeral and likely has less influence on these dynamics. Similarly, wolves in the Southwest may differ in regard to their impacts on livestock, relative to other wolf populations, due to differences in grazing practices. Further, landscape-use patterns in the Southwest may promote a patchier distribution of wolves relative to other areas because of the distribution of suitable habitat. Overall, there is a wealth of questions that are in the process of being answered or that still need to be addressed. A better understanding of some of these dynamics is only part of what wolves in the Southwest mean to me.

Wolves also mean interacting with a variety of people and interests, attempting to understand individual philosophies and concerns, and integrating them into meaningful wolf recovery. Some of my most rewarding experiences as a biologist have been working with local residents in and around wolf recovery areas. People have shared their thoughts, perspectives and knowledge about their businesses, lives and the surrounding country. Although these conversations are often initiated because of wolves, I have benefited and developed because of the broad scope of topics and thoughts. Ultimately, as a biologist, it is important to balance the various interests at stake in wolf recovery while still proceeding toward a recovered population. ”



Charr Crail/Animal Protection Institute

Michele Thew

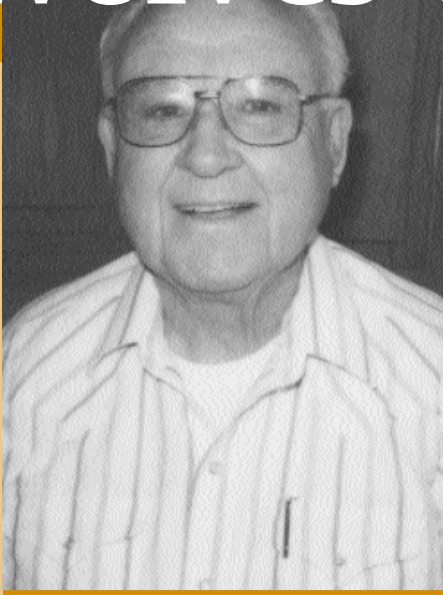
Chief Executive Officer, Animal Protection Institute

“As someone who has made her home in California after many years protecting the interests of animals in Europe, I stand in awe at the beauty and majesty of the wildlife in the United States, especially in the Southwest. I also see the huge challenge that we all face in protecting and preserving wildlife from hunting, trapping and other acts of cruelty and exploitation.

As an advocate for animals, my focus is on the individual, preserving the species by paying attention to the one. As a result, wolf reintroduction poses many issues and challenges for me. While I applaud attempts to return a species to its rightful place in the ecosystem, great care needs to be taken not to give these animals an “experimental” status, thereby exempting them from laws that would otherwise protect them. My belief in valuing the individual also leads to concern over controversial programs that remove individual animals from their homes and packs and place them in a volatile situation at risk from the environment—and at the mercy of those who object to their presence. When I think of wolf reintroduction, all of these thoughts run through my head.

So, every day my life is richer for living in a nation populated by beautiful and amazing creatures. They, like us, need to be valued as individuals worthy of respect. ”

wolves affect your life?



Tom Woods

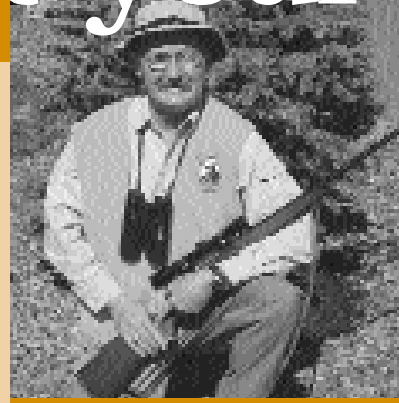
Former member of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission

“ Though I had some knowledge of the Mexican wolf prior to 1986, my interest increased as stories of possible reintroduction in Arizona were circulated. I was a member of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, and we received requests for cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and from support groups to consider reintroduction.

A local group, Preserve Arizona's Wolves (P.A.WS.), led by Bobbie Holaday, began an effective campaign to inform sportsmen and the public about the issue. Our commission was fairly open-minded, but the same could not be said of some hunters and ranchers who envisioned packs of bloodthirsty demons devouring livestock, game animals, pets and children!

After years of hearings and public testimony, Game and Fish approved a protocol agreement to participate in the process. It took another four years to consummate a “Cooperative Reintroduction Plan” in October 1994. Another four years elapsed before the first wolves were released into the holding pens in the rugged Campbell Blue area of eastern Arizona. Bruce Babbitt, secretary of the Interior, led the effort, which attracted major news media coverage.

While elk hunting with my wife in November 2003, we observed an adult male wolf at close range. As I whistled, he stopped and observed us for several minutes. This was my first observation of a wolf in Arizona. I sensed a deep feeling of accomplishment and reward. Finally, after a hundred years, we are headed in the right direction! ”



Lisa Buechler

Dennis Buechler

Co-chair of the Issues and Advocacy Committee of the Colorado Wildlife Federation

“ Growing up on a farm in North Dakota, I loved all animals. I appreciated how they sustained our family, and they were my entertainment. I also grew to appreciate the role of predators, including the foxes, skunks and “chicken hawks” that occasionally stole a chicken for dinner.

I have hunted for more than 45 years, but I shoot only that which I intend to eat. Furthermore, like with all true sportsmen, harvesting and consuming game are only a small part of the reason I go hunting. Just being out in nature is reward enough. Anyone who has sat quietly at sunrise, watching the outdoors come to life, knows what I am talking about.

I enjoy seeing signs of mountain lions and bears when I am hunting or just hiking in the woods, and I would be ecstatic to see wolves in Colorado. I support efforts to reintroduce them in hope that I can observe them hunting before I move on to other hunting grounds. We have plenty of elk to share, and wolves can help herd genetics by culling the weak and sick. Furthermore, it is I who has encroached upon their traditional hunting grounds, not the other way around. ”

Invitation to Readers

International Wolf invites readers to write a 200-word first-person narrative answering the question, “How does the presence of free-ranging wolves affect your life?” Please e-mail your narrative to comasst@wolf.org. Responses will be published on www.wolf.org or in this magazine.

Note: Narratives exceeding 200 words cannot be used because of space limitations.