

After implementing this educational program, we wanted to change some aspects because it was time-consuming and limited in the region and number of schools included and the diversity of educational materials. My biggest wish was to establish a Large Carnivore Information Center to implement educational tasks. Last year we made progress on deciding where to locate the center and how to organize it. We chose Pirin National Park, a beautiful and a popular area for tourists, and we purchased an old building in Vlahi to refurbish and equip as the center.

Vlahi is a popular village for people who are interested in nature conservation. Our colleagues from SEMPERVIVA society are developing a project there for the conservation of three ancient local breeds of sheep, horses and dogs. Other colleagues who are organizing ecotourism activities have chosen Vlahi to be their base. A national park information center is also being built in the village. The planned infrastructure will bring many mountain tourists to Vlahi, and the Large Carnivore Information Center will be a good complement to the other activities.

Once built, we hope the center will become a popular destination for school groups. The center will house a permanent exhibition, and special programming will be offered to groups of students. Our wolf Vucho (and probably a second one) will be an integral part of the center and of educational activities.

We still must raise funds for the center, but we believe we will be successful and that we will realize our ideas for the long-term education of people about the wolf and its value as a unique component of the natural world.

Elena Tsingaraska-Sedefcheva is a biologist pursuing a Ph.D. in the area of wolf ecology. She has coordinated the Wolf Study and Conservation Program since 1997. Her current focus is long-term research of wolves and the establishment of the Large Carnivore Information Center.

WOLVES IN FINLAND

Wolf Population on the Rise in Finland

by Neil Hutt

Growth in the number of wolves in Finland depends exclusively on whether or not people want a sustainable population. There is plenty of room here.

—Riku Lumiario, Game Researcher, Finnish Association for Nature Conservation

Riku Lumiario's words have the ring of familiarity. In an increasingly crowded world, the survival of wolves and other large carnivores depends largely on the tolerance of humans. But animosity toward wolves is strong in Finland just as it is elsewhere, and the Parliament is besieged with demands by segments of the Finnish population to increase the number of wolves that can be legally killed. Member of Parliament (MP) and World Conservation Union Wolf Specialist Erkki Pulliainen reports that some people in locales along the eastern border of Finland want to take matters into their own hands and decide how many wolves should be officially removed in their area. Pulliainen points out, however, that this is not an option. Finland is a member of the European Union (EU), and EU legislation regarding wildlife conservation takes precedence over Finnish law.

Ilpo Kojola of the Finnish Games and Fisheries Research Institute (RKTL) suggests that thorough research must be conducted and wolves must be monitored. "Finland has a viable stock of wolves," he says, "as long as it is not regulated too much." The success of this management philosophy is reflected in Pulliainen's recent report (October 2004) that the number of wolves in Finland has increased from an



earlier 2004 estimate of perhaps 120 animals to approximately 150.

For wolf fans, that is good news. For people who consider the wolf a menace and a nuisance, it is not. Christian Krogell of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry notes that although most Finnish citizens are in favor of viable wolf populations, there is a pervading "but not in my village" attitude as well. Anti-wolf sentiment is high in reindeer herding areas. Also, some citizens worry about the number of moose being killed by wolves. Studies, however, reveal an increase in the moose population—even though human hunters and wolves both kill moose.

According to Pulliainen, the main complaint now is that wolves are killing domestic dogs. And despite no recorded wolf attacks on humans there, fears persist that wolves will harm or kill children. "People seem to need symbolic threatening images, which the wolf is, in most cases," says Pulliainen.

Since 1998, the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute (RKTL) has been conducting research on wolf

continued on page 20

News and Notes

WOLVES KILLED at least two cougars, two grizzly bear cubs, six coyotes and a badger in Yellowstone National Park in 2004 along with their usual take of elk, bison, moose, deer and pronghorn antelope, according to the 2004 Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Report available at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov/annualrpt04/index.htm>.

IDAHO WOLF INFO is now available on a special Web page that can be reached via <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/wildlife/wolves/>.

RECORD WOLF DENSITY. A wolf pack, just 4 miles northeast of the International Wolf Center reached the highest density ever recorded. According to an article in the 2004 *Canadian Field Naturalist* (volume 18, no. 1) by L. David Mech

and Shawn Tracy, the Farm Lake wolf pack reached a density of 31 wolves/40 square miles in summer 1998, and 18 wolves/40 square miles the following winter. The previous record was held by wolves on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, which reached 14 wolves/40 square miles in the 1970s.

WOLF ATTACKS MAN. In a rare and unusual event, an adult female wolf attacked a mine worker on his way home in northern Alberta. The large, physically fit worker tried to pummel the wolf and then grasped it and held it in a headlock until a busload of co-workers arrived, and the wolf ran off. The animal was later killed and found not to be rabid.



WOLF-KILLED DOGS may decrease in Finland now that a new electric coat has been invented for dogs. Wolves kill 20 to 30 dogs each year in Finland, according to Reuters News Service, and a local invention has produced a protective coat that shocks any killing wolf with 1,000 volts of electricity.

WOLVES and other carnivores are the subject of Carnivore Damage Prevention News. It is available at www.cie.org or www.kora.unibe.ch.

ILLINOIS WOLF. A wolf was found dead in Illinois on February 18, probably having dispersed from Wisconsin, and having been hit by a vehicle. The animal was found near Chain O'Lakes State Park in extreme northeastern Illinois. That is the second wolf recorded for the state in the past two and a half years (see Summer 2004 *International Wolf*).

TWO WOLF SYMPOSIA will be held in early October 2005. The International Wolf Center's symposium at Colorado Springs (see ad in this issue), and one hosted by The Wildlife Society's 12th annual conference in Madison, Wisconsin. See www.wildlife.org. ■


Wolves in Finland


continued from page 19


populations, pack size and mobility, territories and diet (70 percent moose, 25 percent wild reindeer, and 5 percent hares, rodents and birds). RKTl researchers use GPS collars and other tracking systems to monitor the locations and movements of wolves.

Additionally, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is implementing a plan that combines conservation measures, legislation, hunting and methods to prevent damage to domestic animals. Says Christian Krogell, "It is especially important to inform the people about preventative measures. Openness and listening to the views of the local population help in getting approval for increasing the wolf population." ■

The author acknowledges the following sources of information:

 Anna Seppanen, "More Money and Changed Attitudes Needed If Endangered Wolves Are to Flourish," *Helsingin Sanomat* (International Edition), February 2, 2002 (online archives www2.helsinginsanomat.fi/english/archive/news.asp?id=2002202191E3).

 Erkki Pulliainen, e-mail to L. David Mech, October 5, 2004, used by permission of the author.

 Ilpo Kojola, "GPS Collars on Wolves: The Finnish Wolf Research Project 2004," Head Predator Researcher, Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute (RKTl), Finland, www.environmental-studies.de/projects/20/body_wolves-2.html.

Neil Hutt is an educator and International Wolf Center board member who lives in Purcellville, Virginia.