INTERNATIONAL WOLF

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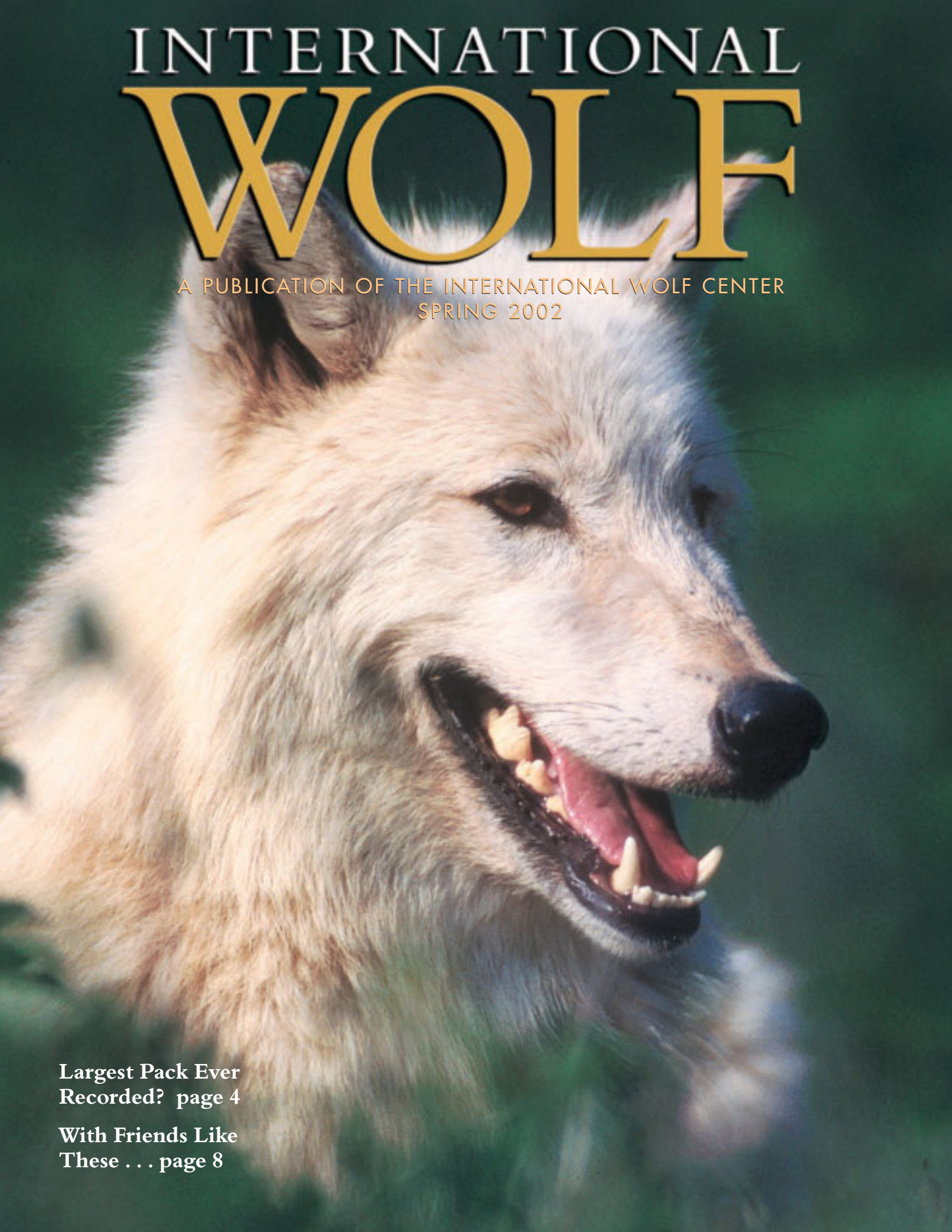

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International Wolf Center

INTERNATIONAL
WOLF
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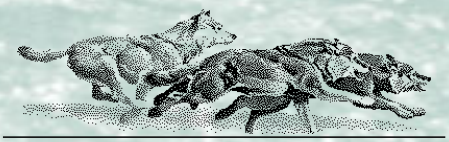
Lynn and Donna Rogers

Departments

On The Cover

Photo by Douglas Smith/NPS

Douglas Smith/NPS



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International Wolf is a forum for airing facts, ideas and attitudes about wolf-related issues. Articles and materials printed in *International Wolf* do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the International Wolf Center or its board of directors.

International Wolf welcomes submissions of personal adventures with wolves and wolf photographs (especially black and white). Prior to submission of other types of manuscripts, address queries to Mary Ortiz, publications director.

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PHOTOS: Unless otherwise noted, or obvious from the caption or article text, photos are of captive wolves.

Letters

Words Matter

In a recent special issue of *International Wolf* on the "Global Challenge of Living with Wolves," there are a host of articles about livestock conflicts with wolves from around the world. A common theme in many of the articles is that wolves create negative impacts on livestock around the world. I would have stated it the other way around: livestock create negative impacts on wolves around the world. How we describe the issue and the words we use to describe it have a lot to do with how we respond.

That's why I believe it's important for wolf supporters to clearly articulate that it is the livestock operations that have been imposed on wolves. Legitimizing the livestock industry's message by using their language and their perception of the "problem" to describe wolf recovery issues ultimately harms wolf restoration.

Most of the problems from predators reported by livestock producers are created by their own animal husbandry customs. But we seldom hold the producers accountable. Yet when a sloppy camper leaves out food unattended in a campground and is subsequently attacked by a bear, we usually hold the camper responsible for the situation that created the conflict, not the bear. There are no "problem" wolves or bears, only problem people. If anyone should modify or change their behavior, it should be humans. We are always telling ourselves that we're the most intelligent animals—maybe it's time we started acting like it.

Advocating things like "training wolves" with shock collars to avoid livestock, using collars with sedatives to stop wolves from wandering from predetermined "safe" areas, and so forth poses serious philosophical questions about just what kind of wolves we want. Some are even advocating sterilization of wolves and coyotes to reduce predation problems through population control, with no attempt to understand how this may affect many other things, like the control of smaller rodents and metapredators by the presence of these larger predators.

Such a Brave New World of wildlife behavior modification represents a fundamentally flawed view of wildlife. It seeks to take the wild out of wildlife. It creates the illusion of wildness, all the while maintaining a tight grip on control.

George Wuerthner
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International Wolf Center

From the Executive Director

Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea is the title of a remarkable new book, by Carl Zimmer. The book traces, in part, Charles Darwin's progression of field experiences and the refinement of his ideas to the creation of the bold scientific conclusions that defined the principle unifying all life forms. As I read the book, I found parallels in the unfolding of the concept of evolution with the ever developing saga of wolf restoration. Despite enormous pressures and against significant odds, the power of these two brilliant ideas has prevailed—notwithstanding ongoing controversies and often immense challenges.

Walter Medwid

Perhaps the 150 years of controversy surrounding Darwin's ideas should suggest to us that while we have made progress in building support for the concept of wolf restoration philosophically and on the ground, we have just begun to experience the challenges this bold idea will face far into the future. And just as more pieces of the evolution jigsaw puzzle have been found over the past decades to reinforce the theory, examples of wolves and humans successfully coexisting—as in Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin—will serve as definitive models to prove that wolf restoration and recovery can work, contrary to the naysayers.

Speaking of models, one of the more curious stories coming out of the Minnesota experience this year relates to the depredation statistics kept by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services. The September 2001 report (covering nine months of activity and comparing statistics with the same period from the previous year) shows a 55 percent reduction in the number of verified complaints of wolf depredation on livestock, a 56 percent reduction in the number of farms experiencing depredation, and a 70 percent drop in the number of wolves killed through the depredation program. These reductions occurred following a steady increase in wolf depredations on livestock as the wolf population and range increased in the 1990s. While any one year presents only a small part of the picture, Minnesota wolves appear to be defying conventional wisdom, that is, more wolves equal more problems. A robust white-tailed deer population may be part of the reason for the reductions, or wolf numbers may have temporarily dropped. However, it is also nice to speculate about what other surprises the Minnesota wolves will have for us, as we follow their intriguing story. ■

WOLF PACK SIZE

How Did The Druid Peak Pack Get To Be So BIG?

by DOUGLAS SMITH and RICK MCINTYRE

It is an impressive and unforgettable sight: 37 wild wolves greeting each other and playfully romping around their rendezvous site. Yellowstone National Park's Druid Peak pack grew from just 8 wolves in 1999 to 27 in 2000 to 37 in 2001. This may be the largest pack of wolves ever documented. How did the pack get so big, and how does it compare to other large packs in recorded wolf history? We hope to answer this question, but along the way we will discuss pack size in general, for it is an interesting and important aspect of wolf behavior and ecology.

What determines how many wolves live in a pack is an old ques-

tion frequently asked by wolf biologists. Arguably it is one of the first and most basic questions to ask. Answers presented so far include killing efficiency, benefits of sociality, territory defense, prey size, and population density. These answers are probably not mutually exclusive; in other words, several factors contribute both to the evolution of wolves living in groups (families) and to the optimal size of those groups. We will not discuss all these factors in detail but reflect on a few, using the Druid Peak pack as an example.

The most basic pack structure and the kind encountered most frequently is a mated pair of wolves and their pups. Average litter size for wolves in North America is about 5 or 6, so most wolf packs range between 5 and 10 wolves, varying because of litter size, mortality and dispersal. Larger packs build on this basic structure when more pups are born in a year before all the pups from the previous year die or leave.

The Druid Peak pack of 37 wolves may be the largest pack ever documented.

Low mortality is one contributor to large packs. Protected areas, like Yellowstone National Park, where human-caused mortality—often the leading type of mortality for wolves—is low will typically support larger wolf packs.

Often large packs are multigenerational, meaning that wolves of various age classes live in the pack. All but one of the park's nine wolf packs are multigenerational, and the one was recently formed, so it is a pair with pups. Average pack size in the park is a whopping 14.6 wolves/pack. Just over the park boundary average pack size declines to 5.8, because of higher human-caused mortality and more youthful packs (pairs with pups).

In addition to mortality, prey size may influence the size of packs. Early on, biologists, including Adolph Murie in 1944, proposed that wolves need to hunt in packs because their prey are larger than they are: "Because wolves rely mainly on large animals, the pack is an advantageous manner in which to hunt" (*The Wolves of Mount McKinley,* p. 45). After time and further study, this idea has gone out of vogue, but prey size may still play a role in pack size.

We now know that one wolf can kill amazingly large prey, a bison or musk ox, for example. Murie went on to say that if the kill is not large enough, some wolves will go hungry, suggesting that prey size may impose limits on pack size. We feel that prey

Wolf #21 is the alpha male of the Druid Peak pack.

Christopher and Miranda Bly

size may have something to do with why the Druid Peak pack is so large; at 37 wolves none is going hungry.

Wolves feed on prey that range widely in size, from white-tailed deer to moose and bison. Do pack sizes vary based on size of their main prey? The answer is, not much, but it is important to look beyond averages. Packs that feed on larger prey tend to be the ones that get big.

R. A. Rausch recorded a pack of 36 wolves in Alaska during the 1960s. Their primary prey was moose. Another large pack of 29 was observed in Alaska by Layne Adams and Tom Meier. These wolves also ate primarily moose. Ludwig Carbyn recorded a pack of 42 wolves in Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Alberta, an area where wolves prey predominantly on bison, but he was not certain that it was a single pack. It might have been an aggregation of several. He recorded five other packs of greater than 20 wolves, although he stated that the average in winter appeared to be from 12 to 16. These studies and others suggest that packs over 20 wolves are exceptionally big and uncommon, and their size may be linked to the amount of food the wolves can procure.

In Yellowstone National Park the Rose Creek pack reached 24 individuals in 1998, and their predominant prey was elk, a much smaller prey item than moose or bison. Interestingly, the Rose Creek pack was not able to maintain its high numbers very long. The pack declined quickly after reaching its high count. By late 2000 it had broken into two packs of five, and during spring 2001 one of those groups did not reproduce and has since split up.

Part of the Rose Creek pack's decline may be related to the extremely large size of the Druid Peak pack. The Druid Peak pack's territory abuts the Rose Creek pack's. Until the winter of 2001 the larger Rose Creek pack had no trouble keeping Druid Peak wolves away, in spite of many territorial skirmishes, because since 1996 the Druid Peak pack had always numbered fewer than 10 wolves. In 2000 the pack produced three litters of pups, burgeoning to 27 wolves—a lot more mouths to feed.

To feed that many wolves, the Druid Peak pack had to find more elk. With its number declining, the Rose Creek pack would have a hard time defending its prey-rich territory against the now much larger Druid Peak pack. Last winter that is exactly what happened: Druid Peak wolves made many raids into Rose Creek territory, some of which we observed, and Druid Peak eventually took over a large chunk of Rose Creek territory. Druid Peak had

In 1998 the Rose Creek pack numbered 24 wolves, 16 of which were photographed near Slough Creek. They numbered 24 only temporarily as their numbers declined rapidly due to mortality and dispersal. In 2000 the pack split into two groups of five, and in 2001 is a group of nine and a group of two, named the Rose Creek II pack and Tower pack, respectively.

Photos by Douglas Smith/NPS

Christopher and Miranda Bly

Left: This wolf is #224, a very bold male yearling of the Druid Peak pack. The rest of the pack had moved on, but he decided to do a little exploring on his own.

found more elk to maintain its large pack. Interestingly, the three largest packs in Yellowstone in December 2001, the Druid Peak (37 wolves), the Nez Perce (20+ wolves) and the Yellowstone Delta (16 wolves), are making extraterritorial forays, probably trying to find enough elk to eat. The other, smaller packs are within their normal territories.

In April 2001 the Druid Peak pack was audacious enough to use an old Rose Creek pack den, one dug in 1996 under a large boulder. The Druid Peak wolves also denned in their traditional den in Lamar Valley. At least 2 Druid females gave birth to 12 pups. Now the Druid Peak pack, with 5 or 6 adults, 20 yearlings, and 12 pups, numbers 37 or 38, although since we cannot always find the twelfth pup, we count the pack size as 37 wolves. The sight of these wolves moving across Lamar Valley is awe inspiring. We have seen this huge aggregation of wolves all together only once; they have been operating as subgroups because the pack is probably too large to function efficiently together.

Given the idea that prey size regulates pack size, how can such a large pack maintain itself? Size of the pack is related to food abundance, which can vary because of factors other than prey size. Prey acquisition rate is another variable that can affect food abundance and keep the amount of food for the pack steady enough to support it. The Rose Creek pack declined in number probably because it could no longer maintain the kill rates necessary to feed the entire pack. To feed its many wolves, the Druid Peak pack must increase how many elk they feed on. We predict that this extremely large pack, like the Rose Creek pack, will not be able to maintain its size. By mid-winter, wolves will begin leaving or dying, keeping the pack in tune with what the environment can support.

Will our predictions be correct? Will the Druid Peak pack split into permanent, nonintermingling subgroups and subdivide its territory? Will the Rose Creek pack increase again and retake its old territory? One of the adult females in the Druid Peak pack is being picked on and could leave, and this year the Rose Creek wolves produced at least 6 pups. These are signs of change, but we don't know now what will happen. This is an ongoing story—one that we are eager to follow. ■

Average pack size in Yellowstone National park is a whopping 14.6 wolves/pack.

Douglas W. Smith is project leader and biologist for the Yellowstone Gray Wolf Restoration Project in Yellowstone National Park. His many publications include The Wolves of Yellowstone, *co-authored with Michael K. Phillips, a chronology of the first two years of the wolf restoration effort in Yellowstone National Park.*

Rick McIntyre works for the Yellowstone Gray Wolf Restoration Project. He is the author of A Society of Wolves, *and the editor of* War Against the Wolf: American's Campaign to Exterminate the Wolf.

William Rideg, Kishenehn Wildlife Works

With Friends

Two articles offer examples of how the new

Don't Feed Wolves Say Experts

BY KEVIN STRAUSS

This article originally appeared in the Ely Timberjay, *August 18, 2001. Reprinted with permission.*

Some residents of Ely, Minnesota, are concerned that attempts by some individuals to feed wolves could lead to serious problems, both for wolves and humans. The International Wolf Center has received several reports of people leaving food out for wolves on both public and private property in the Ely area. Staff have reported seeing piles of dog food, steaks, mashed potatoes, ice cream and peaches in areas where wolves have been seen in the past.

"It is never a good procedure to feed wild wolves. By doing that you are artificially concentrating wolves in an area, and that area may be close to human habitations," said U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services biologist Bill Paul.

Paul's department deals with calls about nuisance wolves. Last year, he received a call about a wolf lurking in a woman's backyard near Ely. On investigation, Paul discovered that a neighbor had been feeding a female wolf and her pups nearby.

According to Paul, every year his office gets a half dozen complaints about wolves in people's yards or wolves that kill dogs, and when people feed wolves close to town, those problems will only increase. "We want wolves to be

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BY STEVE GROOMS

Only three decades ago, the wolf population in the United States was perilously low and limited to a small part of northern Minnesota. Wolves were feared and reviled by those few folks who lived near them, and it was routine for humans to try to kill any wolf they saw. When official wolf recovery efforts began in the mid-1970s, it was not at all clear that managers would be able to save populations of an animal that had been systematically persecuted throughout history.

Now wolves are thriving over a broad range in three Great Lakes states and another broad range in the Northern Rockies. To an extent that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago, people and wolves are managing to live near each other without undue conflict.

Several laws and management programs helped bring about this astonishing change in the status of wolves, but the whole process was made possible by a dramatic turnabout in people's attitudes toward wolves. One of the most hated and persecuted animals in Western civilization is now not only tolerated but respected, admired and even idolized by increasing numbers of wolf fans.

Ironically, this major reversal in attitudes toward wolves carries with it new problems and new threats to the old, troubled relationship between humans and wolves. Once wolf recovery was mostly a matter of protecting wolves from their many enemies and their guns, traps, snares and poisons. Today wolf managers and people who admire wolves have to worry about protecting wolves from people who adore wolves and want to have a positive personal relationship with them.

Like These . . .

positive attitude toward wolves can create new problems for wolves.

The accompanying two articles offer examples of how the new positive attitude toward wolves can create new problems for wolves, wolf managers and the general public. Bill Paul's article discusses the many unintended bad outcomes that can result when people release pet wolves or wolf-dog hybrids into the wild. Kevin Strauss's article reports on the increasingly troublesome practice of feeding wild wolves, concentrating them and altering their perceptions of humans. Both practices involve misguided sympathy that can yield deadly outcomes for people, livestock, pets and wild wolves.

It has not been easy to craft an appropriate relationship of tolerance and respect between wolves and humans. That relationship continues to be troubled, although it has changed enormously. Wolf restoration used to be a simple matter of protecting wolves from their enemies. Now it requires that managers protect wolves from their friends as well.

Steve Grooms has been writing about wolf management since 1976. He is the author of the book The Return of the Wolf, *and serves on* International Wolf *magazine's advisory committee.*

Wolves have been fed by people in the Ely area, and wolf-dog hybrids were released near Tower, Minnesota.

Releases of Tame Wolves and Hybrids Give Wild Wolves a Black Eye

BY BILL PAUL

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services program in Minnesota is responsible for resolving conflicts that occur between wolves and livestock, and wolves and humans. That job is difficult enough without the added burden of dealing with illegal releases of tame wolves and wolf-dog hybrids within Minnesota's wolf range. Usually, people release tame wolves or wolf-dog hybrids for either of two reasons: the animal or animals become too difficult for the owner to handle or care for, or the owner mistakenly thinks that these tame wolves or wolf-dog hybrids may be successfully released into the wild to survive on their own or to join up with wild wolves.

The truth is that these misguided, illegal releases benefit neither the animals released nor wild wolves. Tame wolves and wolf-dog hybrids that are released into the wild are very likely to gravitate to human-occupied areas, kill livestock or pets, and exhibit unusual or bold behavior because they have been raised in captivity and are habituated to people. When these animals show up at farms or in people's yards, they are often mistaken for wild wolves, and their bold or unusual behavior may raise serious safety concerns among people.

For example, a group of 8 to 10 wolf-dog hybrids (including both adults and pups) was released in the Tower area in early September 2001. Wildlife Services

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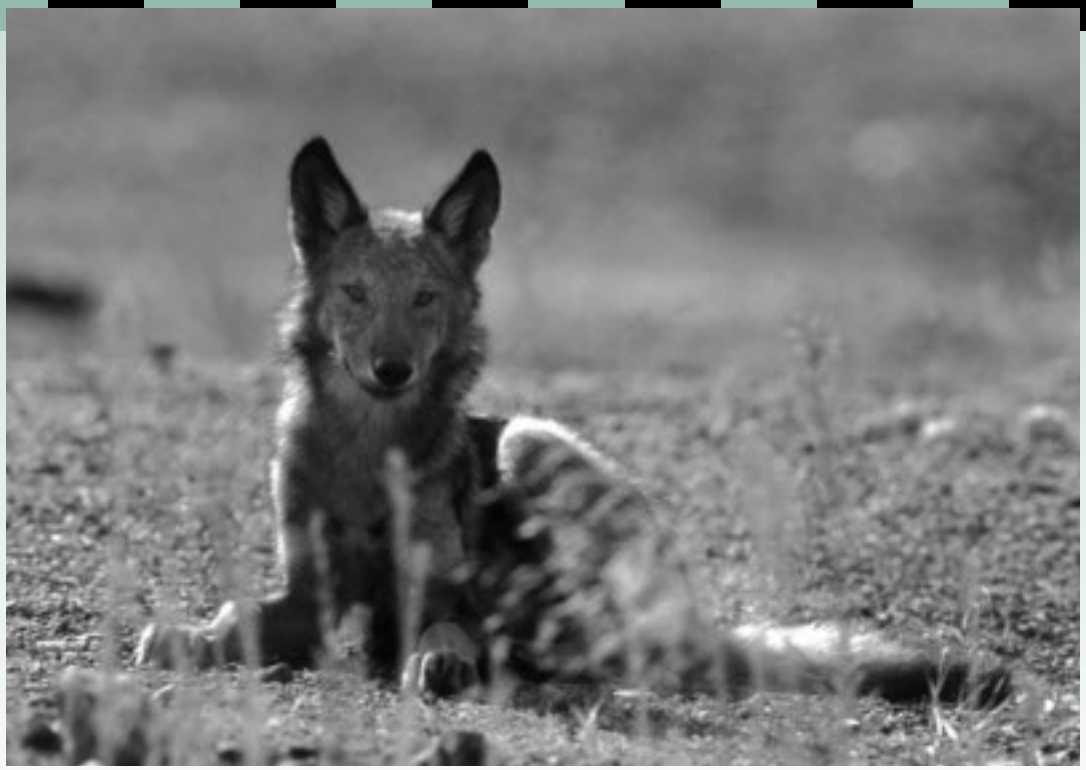

Lynn and Donna Rogers

Possibly because of feedings, this Farm Lake pack pup and its pack mates lost much of their fear of cars and people.

Feeding Wolves

continued from page 8

as fearful of humans as possible to minimize conflicts with humans and domestic animals," said Paul.

In national parks, many habituated bears must be destroyed to prevent conflicts between bears and park visitors. Because of this, park staff teach visitors the adage that "a fed bear is a dead bear" to remind people not to feed wild animals. The same might apply to wolves, say wildlife officials here.

Possibly because of the feedings, some of the wolves in what researchers call the Farm Lake pack, living east of Ely, have lost their fear of cars to such an extent that people are seeing them standing out on the Fernberg Trail roadway. "The biggest danger is to the wolves, not the people," said Kawishiwi Field Lab wildlife research biologist Mike Nelson. According to Nelson, wolves who see cars as a source of food are much more likely to be hit on the highway.

"The state discourages the public from feeding wild animals, and wolves would be no different. There haven't been any problems with wolves attacking people in the area. They have killed livestock and pets in the area, though," said Nelson.

At least one resort on the Fernberg Trail is seeing more wolf activity. According to Kawishiwi Lodge manager Harry Homer, two weeks ago, three resort visitors reported seeing a wolf near their cabins. The Kawishiwi Lodge cat disappeared at the same time.

"I'm not sure that people in the Ely area want wolves to learn to associate humans with food," said Andrea Lorek Strauss, information and education director for the International Wolf Center. "People empathize with wild animals, which is fine, but when they try to help by putting out food or even in some cases rescuing (supposedly abandoned) wolf pups, they aren't doing the animals any favors," she said.

According to Strauss, about 50 percent of wolf pups starve every year. If this didn't happen, we would soon have an overpopulation of wolves in the area.

When people feed wolves close to town, conflicts with humans and pets will only increase.

According to Paul, people who are feeding wolves aren't the only ones who are luring wolves into closer contact with humans: "When people are feeding deer in their backyards in the winter, they create artificial winter deeryards, and that brings in wolves close around town. That increases the chances for conflicts and does a disservice to wolves."

Kevin Strauss is a nature writer and storyteller who lives in Ely, Minnesota. He is currently working on a CD of wolf stories and a book of traditional wolf stories from around the world.

Release of Tame Wolves and Hybrids

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received several calls from a cluster of rural Tower residents reporting that "wolves" were coming into their yards, up onto their porches or decks, and hanging around their homes day after day. One resident's dog was killed by the "wolves," and several residents expressed concern for human safety because of the boldness of the "wolves," which seemed oblivious to human harassment.

Wildlife Services personnel responded to the complaints and were able to shoot two of the animals, which were determined to be wolf-dog hybrids. The physical appearance of some of the animals was very wolflike (perhaps 3/4 wolf), which explained why people thought they were wild wolves. However, the animals also had some dog or captive animal characteristics, such as short stocky legs, a three-quarter-length tail, and unfurred ear tips. All of the animals were also a distinctive blondish red. In addition to the two animals that were shot, two others were trapped and destroyed. The taking of the four wolf-dog hybrids caused the remaining animals to move away from the area where they had settled. It is unclear whether they survived. Some of the adult animals may disperse to other areas and cause additional problems. Obviously, this illegal release benefited neither the animals released nor the public's perception of wild wolves.

A large group of tame wolves and wolf-dog hybrids was also released during winter 1996-97 in the Barnesville Wildlife Area about 25 miles southeast of Moorhead. At that time, that location was well outside of the established wolf range in the state. During summer 1997 and 1998, these animals caused livestock depredations at three farms in the Rollag area. Several calves were killed or wounded at the farms, and Wildlife Services personnel removed two animals that were determined to be tame wolves because they were captured in close association with four other animals that were clearly wolf-dog hybrids.

Because two of the animals looked like wild wolves, the affected farmers as well as state and federal personnel were confused as to whether the farmers would be eligible to receive wolf compensation payments for their losses or whether they could legally shoot any remaining problem animals. There was also public speculation that wild wolves had crossed with dogs in that area and produced the hybrids. In 25 years of wolf control across Minnesota's wolf range, Wildlife Services personnel have never documented a situation where a wolf has bred with a dog in the wild and produced offspring. Most encounters between wolves and domestic dogs result in injury or death to the dog.

Wildlife Services personnel also removed a single wolf-dog hybrid during October 2001 from a populated area on the southeast side of Pelican Lake, north of Brainerd. That animal was coming into people's yards, feeding out of dog dishes or garbage, and was observed following people or their pets. During June 2000, two wolf-dog hybrids were removed by Wildlife Services personnel at a rural residence near Remer. They came into a resident's yard multiple times and approached the resident's dogs. Since the resident had a day-care operation, the boldness of the animals raised strong concerns about human safety.

The likelihood of tame wolves or wolf-dog hybrids surviving in the wild is low; their potential for conflict with humans is great.

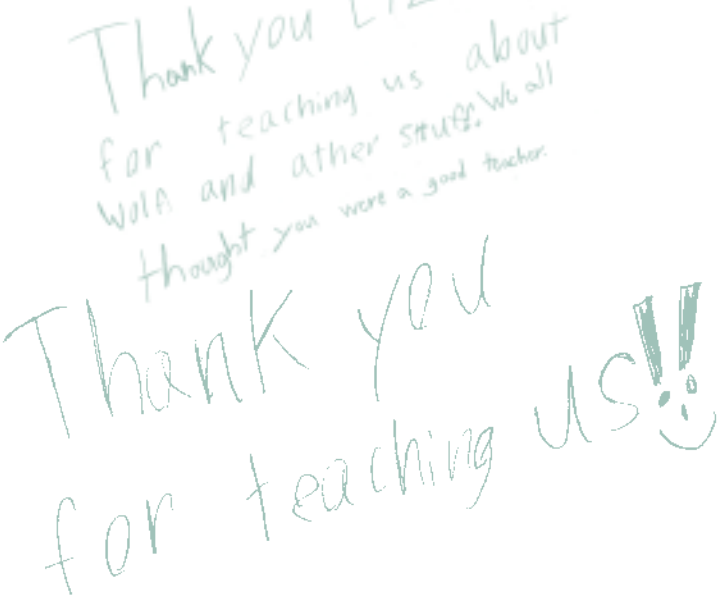
A substantial number of people in the United States own tame wolves or wolf-dog hybrids, often legally but sometimes illegally. Should these animals become a problem, their owners should never attempt to release them into the wild. The likelihood of tame wolves or wolf-dog hybrids surviving in the wild is low, their potential for conflict with humans is great, and their actions often give wild wolves a black eye. ■

www.wolfphotography.com

Bill Paul is the Assistant State Director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services program in Minnesota, where he coordinates federal wolf depredation control activities. He has been involved with wolf research and control programs in Minnesota for 25 years.

The physical appearance of some wolf-dog hybrids, like this female to the left, is very wolflike.

Notes From Home



Children Send Thanks for Wolf Program

Earlier this year Liz Harper, International Wolf Center information specialist, visited Sonnesyn Elementary school in New Hope, MN and presented a wolf program to Third grade students. The Center continues to present programs to schools and other interested groups throughout the nation.

World Press Institute Visits the International Wolf Center

As always, the International Wolf Center is honored to host visitors from all over the world. This past year, the largest group was journalists who participated in the annual World Press Institute program (WPI is located at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota). Participants came from Brazil, the Czech Republic, China, India, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Romania and Uganda. For several years, the trip to Ely has been part of the annual WPI program, which brings news professionals to the United States to visit media in cities throughout the country, government agencies in Washington, D.C., and farms and sites in the Midwest.

Hosted by the *Ely Echo,* participants visited the International Wolf Center as part of their educational and cultural experience. Milt Stenlund, renowned wildlife biologist and wolf researcher, delivered a special presentation, and Program Specialist Jen Westlund gave the visitors a closer look at the ambassador wolves in a *Behind the Scenes* program. Ann Swenson of the *Ely Echo* said that after four months of travel and study around the country, participating journalists invariably report that the visit to Ely was a highlight of their experience in the United States.

Alpha Weekend 2001: Running with Wolves, Walking with Bears

Offered as a special appreciation to Alpha, Alpha Legacy and Wolf Sponsor members, "The Alpha Membership Appreciation Weekend" provides International Wolf Center members with an insider's look at the workings of the Ely interpretive center and Minnesota's north woods. This year's program included an "up close and personal" introduction to the resident pack, with an overview of pack behavior and health and plans for enclosure improvements, a guided back-country outing featuring a traditional Boundary Waters "walleye shore lunch," and sightings of eagle's aeries, loons and wild wolf pups. In a hands-on demonstration of radio telemetry tracking, member Ellen Dietz of Bloomington, Illinois, was rewarded for her persistence, picking up signals from a recently collared wild wolf in the vicinity. Bear biologist and friend of the Center Lynn Rogers welcomed members to a tour of his research station and an introduction to the wild resident bears and cubs that roam his wilderness retreat. "This was really a once-in-a-lifetime experience," acknowledged Lauri Coffman of Reinbeck, Iowa. "Good, then perhaps we will have even more Alpha and Wolf Sponsor members to share it with next year," replied Center Associate Director Mary Ortiz.

International Wolf Center

Left: Lauri and Rick Coffman, Alpha Legacy members from Reinbeck, Iowa, sighting wildlife on the 2001 International Wolf Center membership appreciation weekend.

Nancy jo Tubbs

Executive Director Walter Medwid and board member Neil Hutt hold the $25,000 check received from the Smithsonian Magazine/USTOA.

International Wolf Center Receives Conservation Award

The International Wolf Center is the winner of the first annual Smithsonian Magazine/USTOA Conservation Award. The award from *Smithsonian* magazine and the United States Tour Operators Association's (USTOA) Travelers Conservation Foundation recognizes an individual, organization or destination in the travel or tourism industry that has committed to preserving the environment and its resources. Walter Medwid, the Center's Executive Director, accepted the award of $25,000 on behalf of the organization at the USTOA Annual Conference in Miami on December 4. "We are honored to receive this award for the Center's wolf conservation efforts." said Medwid. "Human misunderstanding has plagued the wolf for centuries. It's our educational mission to present the facts and debunk the myths, creating a world where wolf populations thrive in native lands and where human needs are balanced with an acceptance of the wolf's presence. The enthusiastic interest and participation by children and adults in our programs gives us hope for the survival of wolf populations around the world." ■

INTERNATIONAL WOLF CENTER

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Tracking the Pack

The Pack Gets a Pond

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator

As northern Minnesota residents prepared for winter, the International Wolf Center was preparing for next summer. No, we didn't have the wrong month on the calendar; we were taking the opportunity of the slower fall season to improve the Center's wolf enclosure by constructing a new rock outcrop den and a two-tier pond system with a waterfall.

The new den measures 56 square feet and has two entrances. This will provide Lakota (the bottom-ranking wolf) a place to take refuge from the exuberance of the younger pack members, Shadow and Malik. The pond system consists of an upper pond measuring approximately 96 square feet, a lower pond, which covers approximately 500 square feet, and a 20-foot raceway, which connects the two ponds. The lower pond has a maximum depth of 3 feet, allowing the wolves to take a swim on warm summer days.

Researchers observing wild wolves have noticed the tendency of wolves to use high vantage points to survey their surroundings; the Center's captive wolves are no different. Visitors to the Center and viewers of the Center's Web site (see www.wolf.org) have often observed one of the ambassador pack members standing on a rock in a regal pose. Additional boulders and rocks were added to the enclosure, allowing each wolf to have a rock to claim. As an added stimulus, we stacked three rocks on top of one another to provide ravens a spot to perch. Malik and Shadow appear to be mesmerized by ravens.

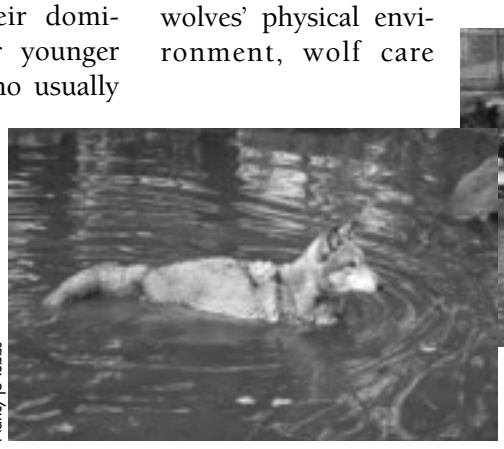
To complete this project with minimal disruption to the wolves, a temporary fence was installed to keep the wolves in the back of their wooded enclosure. Malik was most curious, while Shadow was a bit more fearful, but each spent time watching the movement of the contractors and their equipment. Mackenzie and Lucas took advantage of Shadow's intimidation and asserted their dominance over their younger pack member, who usually resisted their efforts. Lakota spent the time trying to avoid the redirected wrath of Shadow. On one evening, she sought refuge in the construction site by digging under the temporary fence and spending the night with the backhoe.

Andrea Lorek Strauss

Malik watching Aaron Luestek of Luestek Construction working on the den site.

While these improvements to the enclosure will certainly enhance the wolves' physical environment, wolf care staff are equally enthusiastic about the psychological stimulus these features will provide to the pack.

Thanks to all who supported this project. ■



Nancy jo Tubbs

Lucas and Shadow (the white wolf) take a swim in the new pond.

Wolves of the World

by Neil Hutt

WOLVES IN THE UNITED STATES

Michigan to Missouri: The Incredible Journey of Wolf #18

The movement down the trail would seem relentless if it did not appear so effortless. The wolf's body, from neck to hips, appears to float over the long, almost spindly legs and the flicker of wrists, a bicycling drift through the trees, reminiscent of the movement of water or of shadows.

—Barry Lopez,
Of Wolves and Men

International Wolf Center

It is July 1999. Near Ironwood in northwestern Michigan, biologists have caught a young male wolf weighing a hefty 22 pounds. They ear tag the big pup and attach a radio collar lined with foam rubber to ensure a comfortable fit as the pup grows. Jim Hammill, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) biologist, hopes the collar will remain intact long enough for researchers to locate the pup's littermates.

The young wolf's collar survives the rigors of puppyhood, and for nine months, Michigan DNR biologists are able to follow his movements. Then they lose track of him. If #18 has struck out on his own, his defection from his natal pack is not unusual, but it is risky. Hunting is difficult for a lone wolf, and if the youngster trespasses on the territory of another wolf pack, he is in danger of being injured or killed. Nevertheless, if food is available and he can survive, he may be able to find a female disperser, mate, and form a new pack.

Months pass after the disappearance of #18's signal. Then in October 2001, a farmer in northern Missouri returns home from bow hunting. Seeing what he assumes is a coyote near his sheep pen, he nocks an arrow and shoots the animal. After discovering the collar and numbered ear tag, the farmer takes the body to Missouri Conservation Department officials, who verify the animal is indeed an 81-pound gray wolf. It is #18.

A glance at a map reveals the difficulty of #18's incredible journey. Roughly 450 miles as the crow flies lie between his capture site in northwestern Michigan and Grundy County, Missouri. The distance itself is not without precedent. Biologists believe wolves travel farther than any other terrestrial mammal, and many accounts have been verified of wolves dispersing hundreds of miles from their birthplace.

What makes #18's odyssey so remarkable is, in Hammill's words, "the type of terrain and the obstacles this animal had to circum-

vent." The wolf had to cross the Mississippi River and thread his way across the labyrinth of highways that strangles much of the region. "You have to wonder how many people saw this animal along the way and either kept it to themselves or told people and weren't believed," said Michigan DNR biologist Dean Beyer.

Reflecting on #18's incredible journey, Missouri Conservation Department wildlife research biologist Dave Hamilton conceded that the likelihood of seeing a gray wolf in his state is still small. However, #18's journey demonstrates yet again that wolves are capable of great feats of endurance. "For years, we believed and told people that there were no wild wolves in Missouri," Hamilton admitted. "We can't say that anymore."

THE WOLVES OF AYLMER LAKE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, CANADA

Whereabouts of Female and Pups a Mystery

This past August, the International Wolf Center sponsored a trip to Aylmer Lake, a remote destination near the Arctic Circle in Canada's Northwest Territories. The group posted daily reports and photographs of this fascinating landscape and its wildlife on the Center's Web site ("Notes from the Field" at www.wolf.org). This online journal provides both a vicarious adventure for wolf fans everywhere and an insight into the patience and persistence required by biological fieldwork.

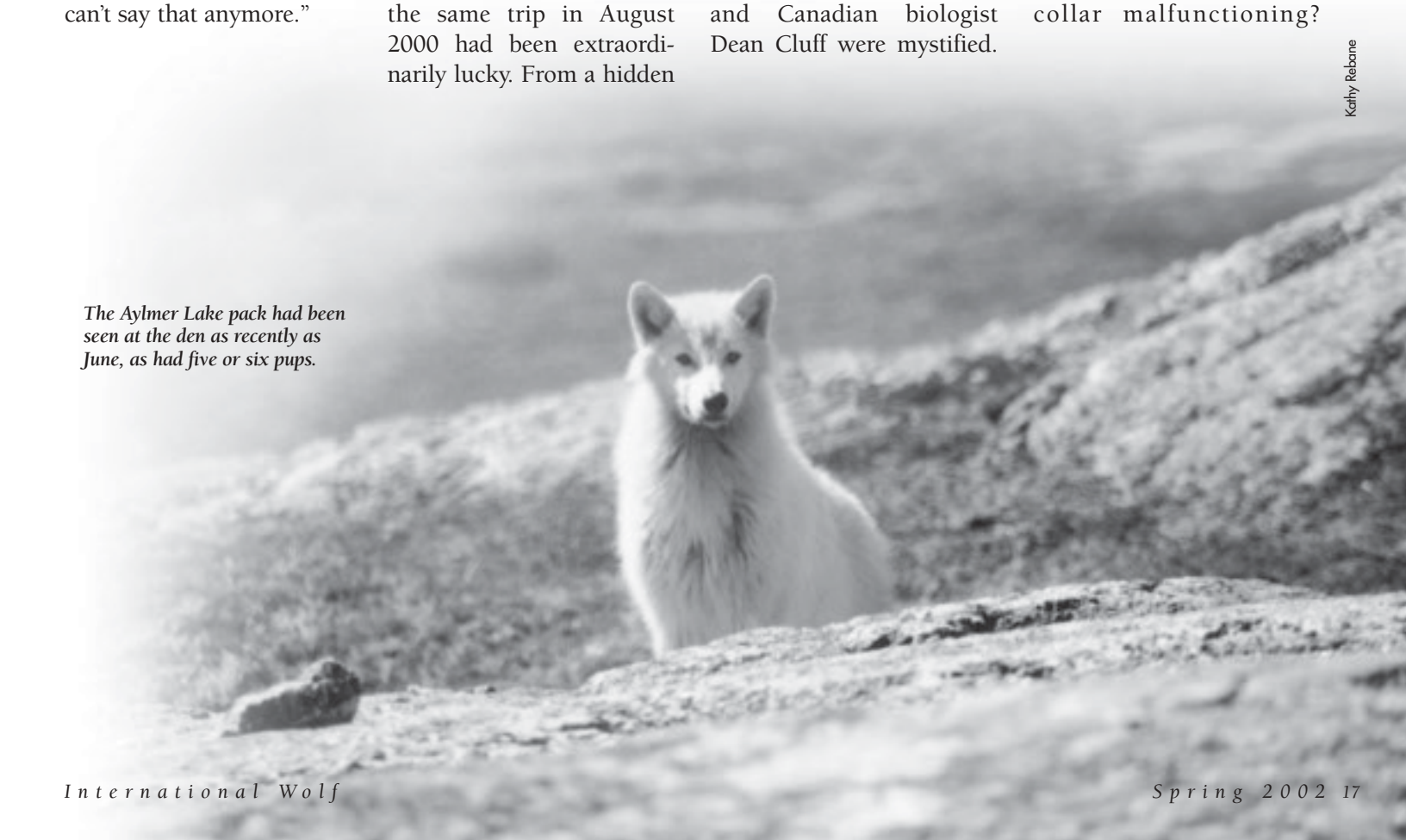
A similar group making the same trip in August 2000 had been extraordinarily lucky. From a hidden vantage point behind a boulder spill, the group watched the Aylmer Lake pack's rendezvous site. They enjoyed the rare sight of 9 adult wolves going about the business of raising 15 pups—playing with them, heading out to hunt, joining together in group howls, and bringing food to the fast-growing youngsters.

The August 2001 group encountered a radically different set of circumstances. Mysteriously, they saw no wolves at the old rendezvous site. While they delighted in spotting the radio-collared breeding male and several yearlings at random locations, they saw no trace of the breeding female and the three-month-old pups on the open tundra, even with the aid of aircraft.

Trip leader Dave Mech and Canadian biologist Dean Cluff were mystified. The Aylmer Lake pack with five or six pups had been seen at the den site as recently as June. According to a local observer, the radio-collared female showed up occasionally at the den in July and early August. But in mid-August, the female and the pups were nowhere to be found.

After a week of diligent searching, the Center's group reluctantly left the region, still pondering the female's whereabouts. Had she left the area and traveled too far for her radio signal to be picked up? That is possible. The pups were old enough to travel provided the mother could hunt and supply them with food. But the research plane ranged long distances in every direction without picking up her signal.

Was the female's radio collar malfunctioning?

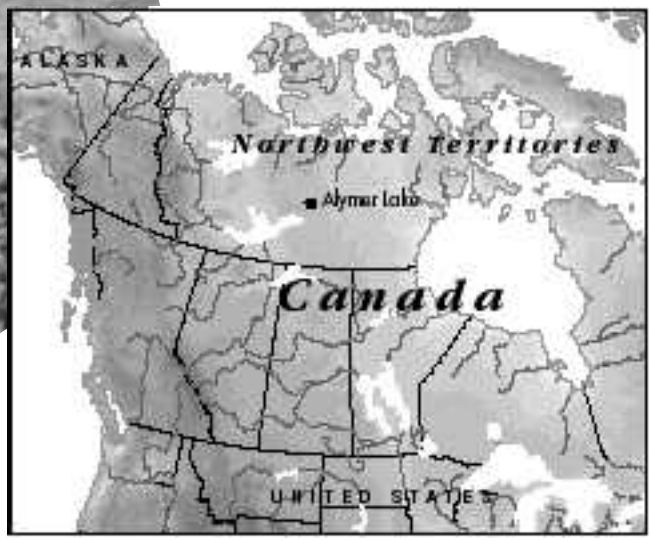


Kathy Rebane

The Aylmer Lake pack had been seen at the den as recently as June, as had five or six pups.

Alan Rebane

Caribou is the main prey species of the Alymer Lake pack.



Tristan Rebane

Mech and Cluff considered that unlikely. The collars are durable, and the batteries in the transmitter were relatively fresh. In addition, the breeding male was always observed alone or with the juveniles. Even if the female had remained in the area with a nonfunctioning collar, chances are good that someone would have spotted her or the pups.

Was the mother dead? Mech and Cluff concluded that was possible but also unlikely. Biologists never heard a mortality signal from the transmitter on her collar, a rapid beep indicating she had not moved for a long time.

Canadian researchers continued the air search in August and September without locating the Aylmer Lake female. The flights produced a puzzling observation: low pup numbers seemed to be widespread throughout the region.

Cluff is evaluating several factors that might have hampered the biologists' ability to find pups. The ground was mottled from early snowfall, so observers might have simply failed to spot some wolves that were present.

If, however, pup production or survival was poor throughout Cluff's study area, the question becomes, Why? Since caribou arrived unusually late in the region near many of the area's den sites, some pups may have starved. "Still," said Cluff, "adult wolves are quite mobile, and surely they could still encounter caribou, some of which they could kill for food."

Perhaps next summer will yield a solution to the puzzle when another Center group travels to the Northwest Territories. Until then, the answer to the riddle of the Aylmer Lake female and her pups remains locked in the winter darkness and brutal cold enveloping the vast tundra.

Wolf Population Declines

Kurt, Bozcurt, Canavar, Bocu—each of these four local Turkish names means "wolf," a species whose numbers have been declining in Turkey since the 1980s. Mortality has increased for all the reasons common elsewhere: large-scale habitat degradation, intraspecific competition, decrease in the prey base and direct human persecution.

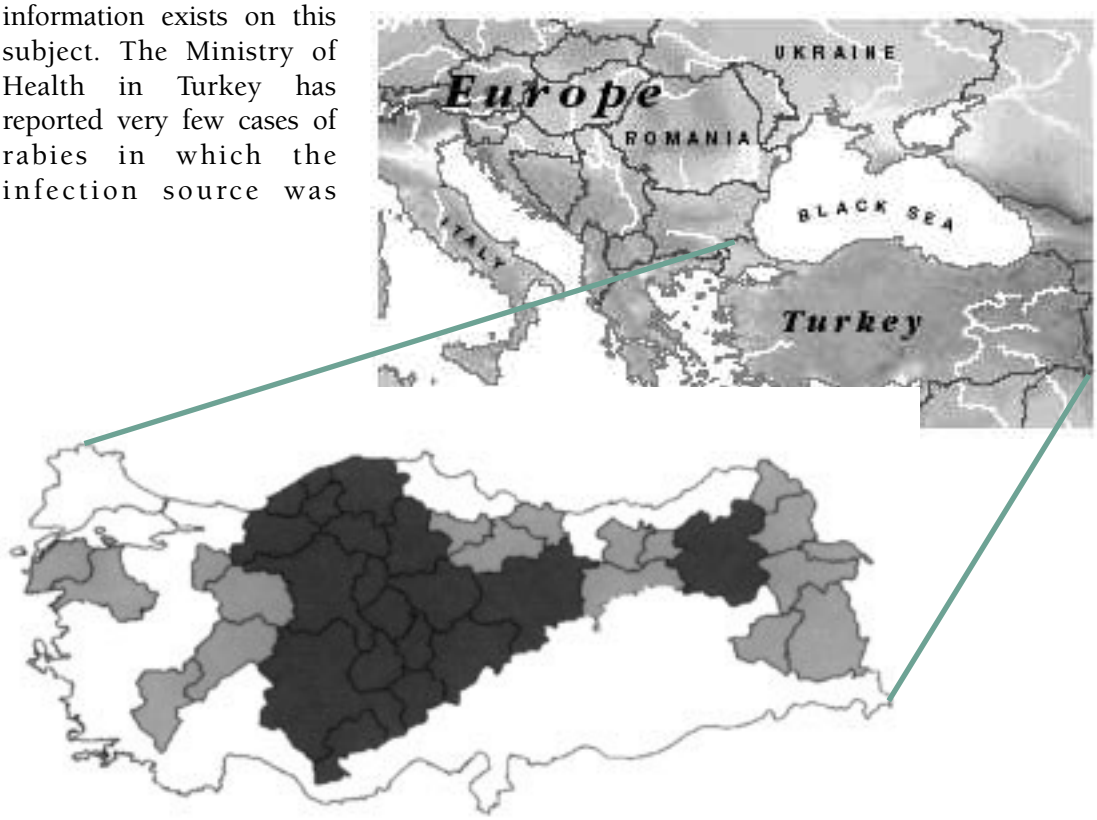
Emre Can of WWF Turkey (The Turkish Society for the Conservation of Nature) studied wolves in 2000 and 2001, and collected data on distribution, prey, conflicts with humans, and conservation and management practices. He reported an estimated 7,000 to 11,000 wild wolves living mainly in the central portion of the country, a land of forests and steppes where the wolf's major prey are wild boar, roe deer and hare.

The main causes of the wolf's decline in Turkey are hunting and direct persecution by humans. The Turkish government considers the wolf a pest, and although no organized hunts are conducted, local people shoot wolves whenever they encounter them. Trapping has also long been a traditional method for killing wolves. The availability of poison since the 1960s has made this efficient extermination method widespread as a means of predator control. Even the Ministry of Forestry freely used poison in different regions of Turkey and recommended its use, according to Can. However, at present, poison is not used as widely as it was before the 1980s.

Wolves are hunted for their pelts in Turkey, but livestock depredation, mainly of sheep and cattle, is the main reason wolves are killed. In addition, people living in rural areas fear they will contract rabies from wolves. According to Can's report, little reliable information exists on this subject. The Ministry of Health in Turkey has reported very few cases of rabies in which the infection source was believed to be wolves. Can observed, however, that statistics were not properly kept, and the real figures were probably higher.

At present, wolves in Turkey are not legally protected. Under the 1937 Turkish Land Hunting Law, the wolf is listed as a pest; it can, therefore, be hunted throughout the year with no limitations. Can said a new hunting proposal is presently before the Turkish parliament. In Can's opinion, however, the proposal is inadequate, and WWF Turkey has suggested specific modifications. According to the Central Hunting Commission and to Forest Law, hunting is forbidden in national parks, production forests, protected forests and game breeding areas. While it is illegal to hunt wolves in these areas, the areas are generally too small to be adequate refuges for wolves.

Can reported that Turkey is preparing for a country-wide survey involving 1,500 local forestry offices. The results will be analyzed and compared to the current information available on numbers and distribution of wolves in Turkey.



Relative density of wolf population in Turkey
Map courtesy of: Ö. Emre Can, WWF Turkey

Survival of Wolves Still Uncertain

In summer 2000, Russian biologist Nikita Ovsyanikov discovered the tracks of two wolves on Wrangel Island, the 5,000-square-mile arctic wildlife reserve located off the northeastern coast of Siberia. Although Wrangel Island's terrestrial and marine ecosystems contain an extraordinary concentration of wildlife, the wolf has been missing for 30 years since being extirpated by the Soviet government to protect the musk oxen and reindeer.

Since money to protect Russia's nature reserves has recently all but disappeared, Ovsyanikov has looked for sponsors to fund his research and to reintroduce wolves to Wrangel Island. Thus, he was elated when in summer 2000, a pioneering ecotourism group organized by International Wolf Center board member Paul Schurke and his wife, Susan, discovered the tracks of two wolves. Ovsyanikov hoped a breeding pair had migrated across the 100 miles of sea ice from the Siberian mainland to Wrangel. If the pair produced pups, perhaps wolves could recover on their own. Researchers would then be able to divert money earmarked for wolf reintroduction to other critical needs of this ecologically sensitive area (*International Wolf,* Summer 2001).

In December 2000, fresh wolf tracks were discovered on the island near a herd of reindeer. Then in April 2001, personnel at a field research station found one wolf track.

Ovsyanikov returned to Wrangel Island in summer 2001, hoping to discover a breeding pair with offspring. However, neither he nor anyone else found any evidence that wolves might be present. Ovsyanikov was disappointed but not discouraged. He noted that during his stay on Wrangel he was unable to travel around the island in search of wolves as much as he would have liked. Also, the main herds of reindeer were concentrated a considerable distance from the field station.

Ovsyanikov said his lack of success in finding wolf tracks could mean one of several things. One wolf may have died, and the other may have left the island. It is also possible that neither wolf survived. Rabies is common

Nikita Ovsyanikov.

To protect the musk oxen and reindeer, the Soviet government extirpated the wolves on Wrangel Island 30 years ago.

among arctic foxes, and the wolves may have contracted the disease. Perhaps, Ovsyanikov speculated, both wolves left the island; however, he considered that unlikely.

Ovsyanikov still holds out hope that both wolves survived and produced pups in spring 2001. Maybe, he said, they hid during summer from places visited by humans. Reindeer were heavily concentrated on the remote western portion of Wrangel, a region Ovsyanikov called Nameless Mountains. It is also possible the wolves raised their pups in eastern Wrangel Island, where large herds of reindeer moved in spring 2001.

"I think if wolves are on the island, they will show themselves, or at least signs of their presence, during the next spring," Ovsyanikov said. "If we don't find any tracks during the next spring-summer season, then we may say for sure that wolves disappeared from the island."

If that disappointing possibility becomes a reality, Ovsyanikov will revisit the plan to reintroduce wolves to Wrangel Island. "But this action will require adequate funding," he said. That may prove to be the most daunting impediment of all to the return of the wolf to this arctic Eden. ■

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

Nikita Ovsyanikov

As A Matter Of Fact

Lynn and Donna Rogers

What is the average litter size of the wolf?

Litter sizes vary, but an average litter size for gray wolves is six, and for red wolves is four to five. If natural prey is not readily available, several pups may die. A wolf pack normally has only one litter of pups each spring, but in areas of high prey abundance more than one female in each pack may give birth. ■

New Question

How many states in the U.S. currently have known breeding packs of wolves?

Personal Encounter

Close Encounters – A Night to Remember

The mystery of things that go bump (crash, thud, rumble, crunch, and pant) in the night.

by Steve Wilson

Illustrations by Robert Bowman, Cottage Grove, Minnesota

This article originally appeared in the Jan.–Feb. 2001 issue of Minnesota Conservation Volunteer, *bimonthly magazine of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Reprinted with permission.*

It was 1:30 in the morning as Lisa Belmonte and I stood on the abandoned railroad grade, hoping to hear a boreal owl.

Lisa, a graduate student at the University of Minnesota–Duluth, had just begun studying boreal owls under a grant from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Nongame Wildlife Program. Because I had studied boreal owls in the same area 10 years ago, I offered to help her get started. Two nights before, she had heard a boreal owl singing from this remote spot near the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and we hoped to relocate it.

No moon illuminated the dark woods, but the silhouette of the surrounding trees stood in stark contrast to the canvas of a night sky pierced by countless stars. Beneath the trees, darkness reigned; I couldn't see Lisa standing 10 feet away. Not a breath of wind swayed the trees, and our ears strained against the immense silence of the night.

Crack!

The sound of a large branch snapping a couple hundred yards away filled the night. Not an unusual sound on cold winter nights when moisture in the wood freezes and expands. Tonight was relatively mild, though, in the mid-20s—much too warm for that phenomenon. *Moose*, I immediately thought.

"What was that?" Lisa whispered.

"Bigfoot," I replied.

"It was not!" she said, her voice betraying just a hint of nervousness.

Moments later, similar noises from the same direction and distance seemed to confirm my first impres-

sion. Unlike deer and wolves—the other large mammals wandering the north woods in winter—moose are not known for their stealth.

Still, as we continued listening and the noises got louder and closer, I found myself puzzling over what we were hearing. Something wasn't right. I'd heard my share of moose passing in the night, and they tend to do just that—pass by. Pausing to feed, they typically make some noise while breaking off smaller twigs to eat, but nothing like what we were hearing.

This animal made a tremendous commotion from one spot, then moved on, sometimes quickly, as evidenced by the rapid *crunch-crunch-crunch* of its hooves in the crusty snow. It didn't travel far, though, before stopping and seeming to thrash violently about, sometimes for minutes at a time.

After one such bout, I heard Lisa's voice from behind me, more insistent this time: "What *was* that?"

"Bigfoot," I said, good-naturedly taking advantage of her admitted discomfort with the north woods at night.

The noises—and whatever was making them—approached, growing louder still. I briefly imagined an animal harried by wolves but dismissed this as too improbable; more likely it was a poor beast infected with brainworm, a parasite that can render an adult moose incapable of controlling its movements.

"Did you hear that?" asked Lisa.

"Hear what?"

"A boreal owl, behind us!"

I hadn't, which I attributed to the growing racket from the woods in front of us. To the sounds of branches breaking and hooves crunching and thudding, add an occasional loud, low, rumbling exhalation. Clearly this was not your normal moose-going-for-a-walk-in-the-woods.

"He sounds angry," I whispered to Lisa.

Whatever was out there was closer now—maybe 50 yards away. My senses were alert, straining for clues to the nature of the event unfolding in front of us. The rumbling, snapping, cracking, thudding, and crunching moved by us and onto the old railroad grade, perhaps 50 yards away. The sound of thudding hooves and heavy breathing then turned and moved toward us.

At that moment my ears detected a new sound—heavy panting, not of one animal, but several. Wolves! In an instant it all made sense—wolves harry the prey until it turns and stands its ground, violently whipping around to keep from being flanked, then breaking and moving again—until forced to make its next stand.

"Steve, let's move over to the truck!" Lisa whispered anxiously, as she too realized what was approaching.

Clearly this was not your normal moose-going-for-a-walk-in-the-woods.

I didn't respond but stood transfixed in the middle of the road, unable to believe what was happening. I did not budge or say anything for fear of interrupting the drama.

"Steve!" Lisa said as loud as she could whisper, as she backed out of the middle of the road.

By the relative strength of the wolves' panting and moose's labored breathing and clumping footsteps, I guessed the wolves were on the heels of or trotting beside the moose. My eyes strained at the darkness, to no avail. I relied entirely on my ears to judge the distance from me to the closing moose and wolf pack.

Thirty, 20, 10 yards, and still they didn't veer off. The rush of sounds filled the night when I thought, *now!* and reached for the switch on my headlamp. For a moment that seemed an eternity, the switch balked. I thought to jump aside but not knowing which way to go, I applied some adrenaline-assisted pressure to the switch. On came the light, and there was the moose—not 10 feet away, and heading straight for me, head down, eyes glazed, its gait and

breathing hinting at the length and gravity of its struggle. I quickly sidestepped as it passed by at no more than arm's length, completely oblivious to me. I swept the light, but the wolves had vanished, except for the sounds of twigs snapping and footfalls crunching lightly in the snow. We listened until we could hear nothing more.

"My legs are shaking!" Lisa exclaimed, not in fear, but in total excitement. I was still in awe of how closely we'd witnessed a life-and-death drama. We compared notes and our mutual disbelief at what we'd experienced, barely acknowledging another brief burst of staccato song from the boreal owl.

After we'd calmed down, Lisa suggested we howl to see if the wolves would respond. We did, and almost immediately elicited a beautiful symphony of howling from down the grade. Figuring the pack wouldn't have taken time to respond if still in pursuit, we guessed they had broken off the chase.

My ears detected a new sound—heavy panting, not of one animal, but several. Wolves!

Apparently the moose had survived—for a time, at least. Lisa, formerly a wolf researcher, admitted her sentiments had been with the predator, and she expressed mild disappointment that we had changed the outcome. I searched my own emotions. As an ecologist I know that most species are sustained by the death of others. But then, recalling the desperate look in the moose's eyes and realizing the wolves would have another chance, I found myself not regretting the role we had played. ■

Steve Wilson is a scientific and natural areas specialist for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

News and Notes

KEEPERS OF THE WOLVES, by Richard P. Thiel, is a new 227-page book (University of Wisconsin Press 2001, $50 cloth, $19.95 paper) discussing the early years of wolf recovery in Wisconsin. With line drawings and written in first person, this is a very readable book.

WOLVES AND SNOWMOBILES in Voyageurs National Park are in the news again. The park, after a decade of prohibiting snowmobiles in certain bays to prevent them from interfering with wolf activity, has rescinded its ban. Studies were unable to show a significant effect of snowmobiling on the wolf population. This result is in accord with an International Wolf Center survey of wolf biologists published in the spring 1992 issue of *International Wolf*.

WOLF 34M DEAD. This breeding male of Yellowstone National Park's Chief Joseph pack was found dead in November near West Yellowstone. Early reports indicated the death may have been natural, but federal law enforcement agents are investigating. The breeding female had died earlier this year, so the future of the pack remains unknown.

WOLF ATTACK? That is the question asked by many readers of a recent article in *Range Magazine* by Heather Smith. Featuring a claim by one of Idaho's staunch wolf opponents that he and his wife were attacked by wolves in Idaho's Salmon River country, the article relates how the radio-collared wolf was shot 10 feet from the man's wife. The incident is under investigation.

WOLF RECOVERY in the northern Rocky Mountains is well under way, and its progress through 2000 has recently been detailed in a government report, available at http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/wolf/annualrpt00/.

WOLF GENETICS are being studied in Canada's Northwest Territories (NWT), and an information newsletter in lay terms is available at www.nwtwildlife.rwed.gov.nt.ca/. The report covers the preliminary findings of a study using genetics, conventional radio-tracking collars and satellite collars on NWT wolves that follow caribou as they migrate hundreds of miles between winter range and summer calving grounds.

MIDWEST WOLF STEWARDS GROUP will meet again in April 2002. This year's meeting is sponsored by the International Wolf Center and the University of Minnesota Duluth, Continuing Education, and will be held in Two Harbors, Minnesota. The group will be gathering to discuss current and future wolf issues in the Midwest.

THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE has posted a reward for up to $10,000 for information leading to the apprehension of the individual or individuals responsible for the recent shooting deaths of two Mexican gray wolves in Arizona. Individuals who were in the area or may have information regarding either of the deaths should call the Arizona Game and Fish Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700.

Johanna Goering

PAYMENTS FOR WOLF DAMAGE in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming will be the subject of a University of Montana study. The project will evaluate the existing livestock-depredation compensation program in those states and how people from various realms view the program. ■

Why Your Dog Rolls in Smelly Stuff

by Aletheia Donahue,
International Wolf Center Intern

Have you ever heard of (or smelled) a dog rolling around in something really smelly? That is called scent rolling. Some people think the wolf does this to hide its smell so that a prey animal will not know it is approaching, although scientists do not yet accept this explanation. Why does the dog do it? The answer is the dog got the scent rolling instinct from its ancestor, the gray wolf.

The dog is a domesticated gray wolf. Domestication is selective breeding of animals toward behavior compatible with humans. The ancestors of the dog are wild wolves that were selected to live with people.

Scientists think the domestication process started at least 12,000 years ago, about the same time that humans changed from hunting and gathering food to farming. When wolves began living with people, they had to change some of their behavior to fit in with the human family. Humans didn't want wolves that were too aggressive or hurt humans. So the wolves had to act submissive—let humans be in charge.

Wolves that lived with humans ate scraps of human food instead of hunting for deer or other large prey. So, unlike wild wolves, they did not need strong jaws to eat raw meat and bone. After many generations, the jaws of the domesticated dog became weaker. Today, a wolf's jaw muscle is more than twice as strong as a dog's jaw muscle.

Over generations domesticated wolves started to act and look like young wolves even when they were adults. Today, dogs have a shorter

International Wolf Center

lynn and Donna Rogers

The dog, such as the Australian Shepherd above, retained the scent rolling instinct from its ancestor, the gray wolf, shown to the right.

muzzle, and some have droopy ears, which are characteristic features of wolf pups. Dogs even act like young wolves, by being submissive and frequently wagging their tails. Some scientists say dogs are *paedomorphic,* which means they are stuck in a youthful stage of life.

Some wolf characteristics stayed with the dog—like the scent rolling instinct. Dogs and wolves use the same communication methods. They both growl, bark and howl. They both use body language, like tucking their tail between their legs and putting their ears back. They both use their scent to communicate. They both urinate to mark their territory.

Every animal has a set of instructions, called genes, that tell the body of the animal how to grow. The genes of the gray wolf are almost exactly the same as the genes of the dog. The species gray wolf is divided into many groups called subspecies. Some scientists think that the dog is a special subspecies of the gray wolf that was domesticated. Biologically, that means the dog is a gray wolf! ■

Activities to try:

- Nobody knows for sure how the first wolves came to live with people. Use the information you learned here to make up your own story about the first dog.
- Compare the size of this paw print to the paw of a dog you know. Which is bigger? Wolves use big paws to hunt. Dogs do not need to hunt, so their paws are not as big.

A Look Beyond

Wolf Lake and Wolf Myths

by Adrian Wydeven

In June 2001, I had an unusual experience for a biologist. I received a call from a producer in Hollywood asking me to fly to Los Angeles to meet with him and his writing team. He was working on a new television show for CBS called *Wolf Lake,* and wanted me to talk to his crew about wolf biology and behavior. At first I hesitated and thought, "Is this guy for real?" Perhaps some friends were pulling my leg and setting me up! I do work with people who are good at that kind of thing.

Accepting the invitation, I flew to Los Angeles the following week. The producer, five writers, and I spent one morning talking about wolf biology and behavior. The show was intended to be science fiction, but the writers wanted to depict wolves accurately. The show would include shape-shifters who change from human beings to wolves. Although the writers seemed sympathetic toward wolf concerns, most had limited knowledge of wolf biology. In about three hours, I conveyed as much information as I could about wolf biology that might be of value to the show.

Afterwards I thought a lot about this experience. My hope had been that although the show was science fiction, it might get viewers to appreciate and become concerned about the conservation of wolves. We wolf conservationists stress education as essential to sound conservation of wolves, but too often we are preaching to the choir. Perhaps through a science fiction show we could encourage greater concern and appreciation of wolves by people who normally don't think much about wolves.

I missed the first two episodes of *Wolf Lake* but did see the third and fourth. The show appears to have little to do with wolves, and it was hard to judge whether the little I saw of wolves was an accurate depiction. On the other hand, I did not see much that would promote negative images of wolves. I don't think people will start believing that werewolves really exist.

But will the show create more myths about wolves that conservationists will need to address? Possible, but I think unlikely. As I read comments from pro-wolf people about *Wolf Lake* on the Internet, I saw several examples of myths we ourselves are dispensing. Some of the myths coming from wolf enthusiasts include: wolves always mate for life, wolves live only in wilderness areas, loss of pets or livestock to wolves occurs only because the owners are doing something wrong, wolves always are in total balance with their environment, and wolves can do no harm. Perhaps we need to be less concerned about myths produced by shows like *Wolf Lake* than about some of the ones we create ourselves. ■

Adrian P. Wydeven is a mammal ecologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and has managed the state wolf program since 1990.

Editor's note: The program Wolf Lake *is not currently being broadcast.*

Credit: cbs

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Top photo by Debbie Reynolds. Bottom photos by Tristan Rebane. Wolf photo by Kathy Rebane

* Wolves and other wildlife have been successfully observed on previous trips to the area. However, due to the wilderness nature of the location, wildlife observations can never be guaranteed.

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