INTERNATIONAL WOLF

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Bonnie and Amber Tamblyn

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Photo by Dean Cluff.

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International Wolf Center

September Surprise: Wolves in the Upper Midwest Back on Endangered Species List

After nearly two years of state and tribal management, a U.S. District Court placed the gray wolf once again under the full protection of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. On September 29, 2008, the court ruled that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) decision to delist the wolf in the Western Great Lakes may have been based on a misinterpretation of the ESA.

The ruling was handed down in response to a lawsuit filed in April 2007 by the Humane Society of the United States and three other groups. The litigants claimed the USFWS acted unlawfully in delisting wolves in the Upper Midwest, and they say that under state management, the species' long-term survival remains in doubt. The plaintiffs insist that increasing habitat loss in the region, hunting and perhaps disease will cause wolf populations to plummet in coming years.

In March 2007, the USFWS removed the estimated 4,000 wolves in the Western Great Lakes "distinct population segment" (DPS) from protection under federal law because the species was biologically recovered in that specific geographic area.

The judge did not address whether the Upper Midwestern wolves are biologically recovered. Nevertheless, he contended that neither the language nor the purpose of the ESA supports identifying and delisting a "cluster" (DPS) of wolves in the Western Great Lakes region separately from wolves in the rest of the country where the species is not recovered over significant portions of its historic range. Thus, the judge ordered the March 2007 delisting vacated and reinstated previous protections: threatened status in Minnesota and endangered status in Wisconsin and Michigan. He ordered the USFWS to reconsider the 2007 rule and to figure out how wolves in the Upper Midwest can be delisted in compliance with the intent and the language of the ESA.

The plaintiffs have scored a victory, but not everyone is celebrating. Farmers and ranchers are disappointed. In their view, the state management plans ensure a viable gray wolf population while providing options for protecting livestock. It will now be illegal to kill wolves that are attacking domestic livestock in Michigan and Wisconsin. In Minnesota, where the wolf is listed as threatened, only a government agent can kill a wolf unless it is posing a direct danger to human life. Sport hunters see their plans for a regulated hunting season scuttled. And the USFWS is disheartened. Wolves in the Western Great Lakes DPS have exceeded recovery goals. Wolf mortality has not increased sharply after nearly two years of state management. While they try to figure out a way to satisfy the court's ruling, some USFWS agency officials worry that public confidence in the ESA will erode. If the courts will not allow the delisting of biologically recovered wolf populations, what does this imply for other species? And what will be the cost to the public? ■

From the Executive Director

We have had a busy past few months at the International Wolf Center. Two gray wolf pups were transferred to the Center in Ely, Minnesota, in May and were monitored around the clock by our Wolf Care staff and volunteers during the 12 weeks leading up to their introduction to our ambassador pack. The move of the two pups, named Aidan and Denali, into the main living area on August 4 was a complete success due to the extraordinary planning and effort of our Wolf Care team led by Wolf Curator Lori Schmidt. Preparations and the pups' socialization were carefully orchestrated down to the finest detail, gradually increasing the pups' exposure to people and the pack so when the big day finally arrived, it came off without a hitch. The pups spent much of their first day swimming in the pond and, like most adolescents, pestering the adults.

Our thanks and appreciation go to all the volunteers who monitored the pups 24/7, braving the elements and Minnesota mosquitoes throughout the nights to ensure their safety and health. And we cannot say enough about the job done by Lori Schmidt, whose attention to detail and tireless dedication went well beyond the call of duty. Thanks, too, to Sharee Johnson, director of the Center in Ely.

Marc Anderson

Also new, the Center took concrete steps to protect wildlands and habitat by joining a broad coalition of 200 conservation and wildlife organizations in supporting the Minnesota Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. By increasing the state sales tax a mere 3/8 percent, the initiative, if passed, will spend over $5 billion during the next 25 years to protect Minnesota's spectacular natural resources. This decision reflects our commitment to broaden our mission beyond teaching about and protecting wolves to protecting the water and the wildlands that are critical habitat for all wildlife. Go to the Web site www.yesformn.org, and read Nancy Gibson's "A Look Beyond" article in this issue to learn about this important legislation.

In addition, the Center is planning to launch a new program to protect wildlands by hosting our first seminar on conservation easements to explain to private landowners how they can ensure their wildlands remain undeveloped forever.

Some people may think that because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed wolves from the endangered species list, we no longer need to be concerned about their survival, but just the opposite is true. With more wolves now covering more area, the need to expand our reach and educate more people is greater now than ever.

The conservation, environmental, and scientific communities have long recognized and defined the ultimate goal for how societies should organize themselves and how individuals should live. It is, in a word, *sustainability*. Mother Nature, signaling us through global warming and the pending energy crisis, makes the point clear that humans cannot sustain themselves unless all the intricate and interdependent balances of the planet's ecosystems are managed toward sustainability. This is why we seek not only to educate the world about wolves but also to educate the world about the critical need to protect wildlands.

By working together, we can make a difference. ■

MISSION

The International Wolf Center advances the survival of wolf populations by teaching about wolves, their relationship to wildlands and the human role in their future.

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Whatever Happened to the Term ALPHA Wolf?

The word *alpha* applied to wolves has had a long history. For many years books and articles about wolves have mentioned the alpha male and alpha female or the alpha pair. In much popular writing the term is still in use today. However, keen observers may have noticed that during the past few years the trend has begun to wane. For example, 19 prominent wolf biologists from both

Eileen Jurkovich

by L. DAVID MECH

Europe and North America never mentioned the term *alpha* in a long article on breeding pairs of wolves. The article, titled "The Effects of Breeder Loss on Wolves," was published in a 2008 issue of the *Journal of Wildlife Management*. In the 448-page, 2003 book *Wolves: Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation,* edited by Luigi Boitani and myself and written by 23 authors, *alpha* is mentioned in only six places and then only to explain why the term is outdated. What gives?

This change in terminology reflects an important shift in our thinking about wolf social behavior. Rather than viewing a wolf pack as a group of animals organized with a "top dog" that fought its way to the top, or a male-female pair of such aggressive wolves, science has come to understand that most wolf packs are merely family groups formed exactly the same way as human families are formed. That is, maturing male and female wolves from different packs disperse, travel around until they find each other and an area vacant of other wolves but with adequate prey, court, mate, and produce their own litter of pups.

Sometimes this process involves merely a maturing male courting a maturing female in a neighboring pack and then the pair settling down in a territory next to one of the original packs. In more saturated populations, this may mean wolves moving many miles to the very edge of wolf range and finding mates there that have similarly dispersed. This is the process that helps a growing wolf population expand its range. A good example is the ever-increasing wolf population in Wisconsin. There, not only is the main population in the northern part of the state continuing to fill the north with more and more pack territories, but wolves have managed to form a separate population in the central part of the state through this dispersal and proliferation of packs. Currently about 18 packs live in central Wisconsin.

But now back to the family. As the original, new pairing wolves raise their pups, they feed and care for them just like any other animals care for their young. As the pups grow and develop, their parents naturally guide their activities, and the pups naturally follow. During fall when the pups begin to accompany their parents away from the den or rendezvous site and circulate nomadically around the territory, the pups follow the adults and learn their way around. The parents then automatically fall into the leadership role in the pack as they guide the pups throughout their territory. This leadership role, however, does not involve anyone fighting to the top of the group, because just like in a human family, the youngsters naturally follow their parents' lead.

Certainly as the pups further develop, they begin to gain some independence, and individuals might temporarily stray from the group, exploring this and that along the

Bob Landis

As the pups grow and develop, their parents naturally guide their activities, and the pups naturally follow. During fall when the pups begin to accompany their parents away from the den or rendezvous site and circulate nomadically around the territory, the pups follow the adults and learn their way around.

pack's travels. However, the parents continue to guide the group as they hunt prey, scent-mark the territory, fend off scavengers from their kills, or protect the group from neighboring wolf packs that they might encounter.

As the pups continue to develop and reach 1 year of age, their parents produce a second litter of pups, which become the younger siblings of the first litter. Again the parents continue to guide and lead the new litter along with the older litter and remain the pack's leaders. The yearlings naturally dominate the new pups just as older brothers and sisters in a human family might guide the younger siblings, but still there is no general battle to try to gain pack leadership; that just naturally stays with the original parents. Some of the older siblings will disperse between the ages of 1 and 2 in some populations, and in others they may remain with the pack through about 3 years of age. However, eventually almost all of them will disperse, try to find mates, and start their own packs.

Given this natural history of wolf packs, there is no more reason to refer to the parent wolves as alphas than there would be to refer to the parents of a human family as the "alpha" pair. Thus we now refer to these animals as the male breeder and female breeder and as the breeding pair or simply the parents.

So how did science get so far off track for so long and refer to the parent wolves as alphas? The answer is an interesting story that nicely illustrates how science progresses. Several decades ago, before there were many studies of wolves under natural conditions, scientists interested in animal social behavior thought the wolf pack was a random assemblage of wolves that came together as winter approached in order to better hunt their large prey. Thus to study wolves in the only way they knew how, these folks gathered individual wolves from various zoos and placed them together in their own captive colony.

When one puts a random group of any species together artificially, these animals will naturally compete with each other and eventually form a type of dominance hierarchy. This is like the classical pecking order originally described in chickens. In such cases, it is appropriate to refer to the top-ranking individuals as alphas, implying that they competed and fought to gain their position. And so too it was with wolves when placed together artificially. Thus, the main behaviorist who studied wolves in captivity, Rudolph Schenkel, published a famous monograph describing how wolves interact with each other in such a group, asserting then that there is a top-ranking male and a top-ranking female in packs and referring to them as the alphas. This classical monograph was the main piece of literature on wolf social behavior available when

Lynn Rogers

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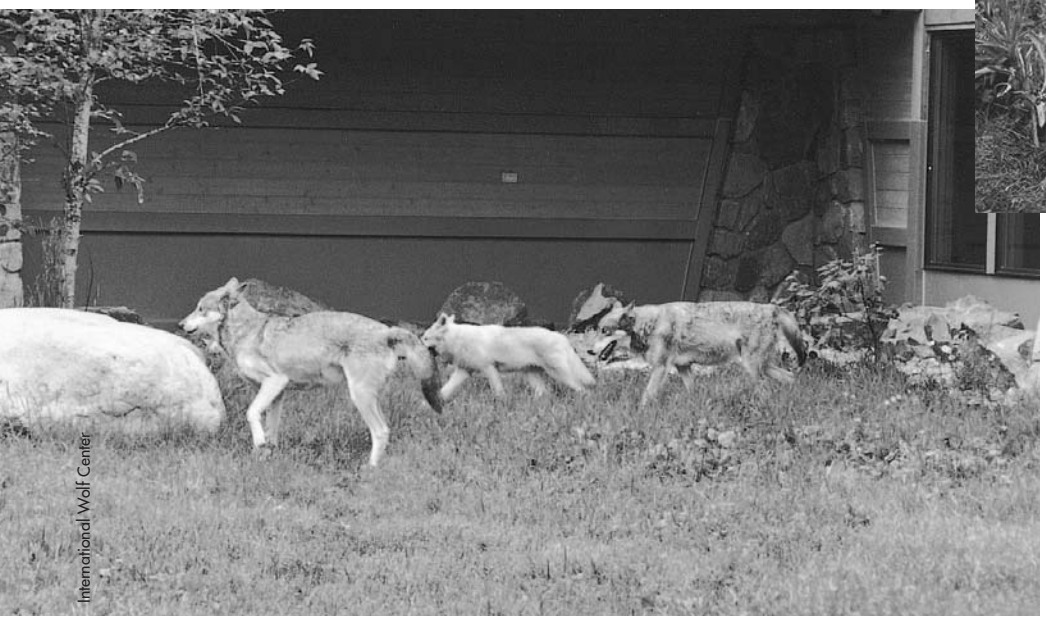

International Wolf Center

When one puts a random group of any species together artificially, these animals will naturally compete with each other and eventually form a type of dominance hierarchy. In such cases, it is appropriate to refer to the top-ranking individuals as alphas, implying that they competed and fought to gain their position.

I crafted my book *The Wolf: Ecology and Behavior of an Endangered Species* in the late 1960s.

This book was a synthesis of available wolf information at the time, so I included much reference to Schenkel's study. The book was timely because no other synthesis about the wolf had been written since 1944, so *The Wolf* sold well. It was originally published in 1970 and republished in paperback in 1981 and is still in print. Over 120,000 copies are now in circulation. Most other general wolf books have relied considerably on *The Wolf* for information, thus spreading the misinformation about alpha wolves far and wide.

Finally in the late 1990s, after I had lived with a wild wolf pack on Ellesmere Island near the North Pole for many summers witnessing firsthand the interactions among parent wolves and their offspring, I decided to correct this misinformation. By then, however, both the lay public and most biologists had fully adopted the alpha concept and terminology. It seemed no one could speak about a wolf pack without mentioning the alphas. Many people would ask me what made an alpha wolf an alpha and what kind of fighting and competition did it take to gain that position. Thus, in 1999 I published the article "Alpha Status, Dominance, and Division of Labor in Wolf Packs" in the *Canadian Journal of Zoology* formally correcting the misinformation in the scientific literature. I followed that up in 2000 with the article "Leadership in Wolf, *Canis lupus*, Packs" in the *Canadian Field Naturalist*, further elaborating on the role of the parent wolves in the pack's social order.

However, it has been said that it generally takes about 20 years for new science to fully seep down to general acceptance, including even new medical breakthroughs. Such seems to be proving true with the alpha-wolf concept. Several of my wolf biologist colleagues have accepted the update, but others suddenly correct themselves in the middle of their conversations with me; still others seem totally oblivious to the whole issue. It is heartening indeed to see newly published papers such as the one I cited above in the introduction to this article that have adopted the proper terminology.

The issue is not merely one of semantics or political correctness. It is one of biological correctness such that the term we use for breeding wolves accurately captures the biological and social role of the animals rather than perpetuate a faulty view.

One place where this issue becomes particularly confusing is Yellowstone National Park, where great numbers of the public spend much time observing wolves right along with wolf biologists and naturalists. Because the Yellowstone wolf population was newly restored and enjoys a great surplus of prey (6,000 to 12,000 elk, 4,000 bison,

Rather than viewing a wolf pack as a group of animals organized with a "top dog" that fought its way to the top, or a male-female pair of such aggressive wolves, science has come to understand that most wolf packs are merely family groups formed exactly the same way as human families are formed.

Some of the older siblings in a pack will disperse between the ages of 1 and 2 in some populations, and in others they may remain with the pack through about 3 years of age.

L. David Mech

and hundreds of deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, moose and other prey), the pack structure of its population is more complex than in most wolf populations. There, young wolves disperse at a later age, when 2 to 3 years old instead of 1 to 2, thus making packs larger and containing more mature individuals than most packs do elsewhere. In these packs where both the mother and some of her daughters mature, all sometimes get bred during the same year, the daughters usually by outside males.

When more than one female breeds in a pack, the females may become more competitive, so it is probably appropriate to refer to the original matriarch as the alpha female and to her daughters as "betas." The Yellowstone observers commonly use this phraseology, but too often it becomes loosely applied to all the breeding wolves, even in packs where there are only single breeders. While it is not incorrect to use *alpha* when applied to packs of multiple breeders, it would be possible and even desirable to use less loaded terminology. For example, the top-ranking female could be called the dominant female or the matriarch, and her breeding daughters, the subordinates. Or individually if the females actually show a dominance order, the second- and third-ranking individuals could be called simply that. This approach would further reform wolf terminology and add to both science's and the public's more accurate perception of the wolf.

Hopefully it will take fewer than 20 years for the media and the public to fully adopt the correct terminology and thus to once and for all end the outmoded view of the wolf pack as an aggressive assortment of wolves consistently competing with each other to take over the pack. ■

L. David Mech is a senior research scientist for the U.S. Geological Survey and founder and vice chair of the International Wolf Center. He has studied wolves for 50 years and published several books and many articles about them.

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Douglas Smith/NPS

One place where the "alpha wolf" issue becomes particularly confusing is Yellowstone National Park. Because the Yellowstone wolf population enjoys a great surplus of prey, the pack structure of its population is more complex than in most wolf populations. There, young wolves disperse at a later age, when 2 to 3 years old instead of 1 to 2, thus making packs larger and containing more mature individuals than most packs do elsewhere.

William Schmidt

Alpine Murder Mystery:

Are Sheepdogs Being Poisoned to Save the Grey Wolf?

by JOHN LICHFIELD

B. Lequette, T. Houard, M.L. Poulle and T. Dahier

Dogs such as the Pyrenean mountain breed are trained to defend sheep from wolves.

Jon Gerrits

Reprint from July 18, 2008,
THE INDEPENDENT

The French have an expression—entre chiens et loups—between the dogs and the wolves. It is a fanciful way of describing the twilight, the mysterious and uncertain time between day and night.

In the beautiful summer pastures of the Maurienne region of the French Alps, something mysterious, and wicked, has been happening in the twilight hours. The events are uncertain but one thing is clear. This is, literally, a story about dogs and wolves.

Since the start of the year, 17 sheepdogs have been poisoned in the mountains of the Maurienne range, which rise to more than 9,000ft, just inside the French frontier with Italy. The dogs have often died in great agony. They include several of the Patou or Pyrenean mountain breed—enormous, white, misleadingly cuddly-looking dogs, which are trained to give their lives, if necessary, to defend sheep from wolves.

No one in the Maurienne range is quite sure what is going on—or, at least, few people admit to knowing much. Everyone is clear about one thing, however. The killings are related, in some way, to the long battle that has been waged between shepherds and wolves—and between sheep-lovers and wolf-lovers—since the European grey wolf, Canis lupus, decided to recolonise France from Italy 16 years ago.

The sheep-grazing industry is an important part of the economy in the Maurienne region.

B and C Prommberger

The most recent attack, earlier this week, destroyed—in the space of a few minutes—a four-month-old Patou puppy called Dom Dom. Three other dogs, including Dom Dom's mother, Belle, were poisoned by balls of pork meat soaked in a chemical used in slug-repellent. They are recovering, after emergency intervention by the local vet, but may never be strong enough to work again.

"This can only have been the work of someone local, someone who knew the area," said Dom Dom's owner, René Grange, a shepherd in the hamlet of Les Villards, near Valloire. "It is two hours' hard walking, and 1,000 metres steeply up hill from the nearest road to the Pain du Sucre [sugar loaf], the pasture where the sheep are grazing this week. You would have to know exactly where the night enclosures for the animals are. You would have to know how to avoid the hut where my two young shepherds were sleeping.

"The pork meat balls were left, some time during the night, most likely just before dawn, in a place where the dogs would be sure to find them. This is the work of a maniac—a madman. What if the meat had been found by a small child? There are tourists everywhere at this time of year, including many British tourists.

"I bred Dom Dom myself and he was a wonderful young dog. It is sickening that he should die in such a way. But you can always replace a dog. You can't replace a child."

There have been a dozen similar incidents in the past eight months, which have killed 16 other dogs, including Dom Dom's father, Volcan, who died in early June.

Philippe Martin is the local vet whose prompt action in finding an

antidote saved M. Grange's other dogs this week. He said that the chemical placed in the meat balls is often found in slug poisons. It causes instant and catastrophic diarrhoea and lung failure in small mammals like dogs. "They finish up dying completely dehydrated but, before that, they drown in their own bronchial fluids," he said.

Why should anyone want to destroy such beautiful sheepdogs? In such a brutal way? Several theories have been put forward.

The most obvious possible explanation is that the dogs are being poisoned by accident by wolf-haters. There have been dozens of incidents of wolves being shot, or poisoned, illegally by shepherds in the French Alps in the past decade. M. Grange—and the Gendarmerie—have dismissed this possibility. "Anyone who knew anything about the mountains would not try to attack wolves by leaving poisoned pork near sheepdogs," M. Grange, 45, said. "This was a deliberate attempt to kill my dogs."

The second possibility is that this is some kind of revenge attack by militant pro-wolf activists, angry at the regular shooting and poisoning of wolves by French shepherds. Some local people are convinced that this may be the explanation but it also fails to add up.

The shepherds in the Maurienne area, including M. Grange, are among those who have most successfully adapted to living with wolves since the animals began to infiltrate across the French-Italian border in the early 1990s.

There are now thought to be about 100 wolves living in France. A few have already left the Alps and crossed motorways and railway lines to recolonise the Massif Central to the west, and the Jura and Vosges to the north.

Most Maurienne shepherds have accepted the sheep-protection methods put forward by the French government's Plan Loup (wolf plan) published four years ago. These include the permanent deployment of Patou and Beauceron dogs and young shepherds to watch the flocks day and night in the high summer pastures and the building of electrified enclosures to protect the sheep after dark.

There has been no wolf attack on sheep in the Maurienne massif for more than two years. There has been no recorded wolf-killing in the Maurienne area in the same period. Why would pro-wolf activists want to attack such a successful example of precisely the kind of man-sheep-wolf co-habitation that they have always insisted was possible?

The sheep-dog killings remain a complete mystery, then? Possibly not.

Daniel Vejux is a wolf expert and a member of the national committee of the main French wildlife study and lobby group, L'Association pour la Protection des Animaux Sauvages. He is convinced that he knows exactly what is going on.

"There are some shepherds, like those in the Maurienne, who have now accepted that the wolf is here in France to stay. But there are others who have sworn never to accept wolves," M. Vejux told The Independent.

"There is a kind of civil war between shepherds, between those who accept government advice, and have taken measures to protect their sheep, and those who only care about one thing, driving the wolves out.

"These attacks on sheepdogs are meant to destabilise the systems which have been adopted to protect sheep from wolves. They are poisoning sheepdogs to intimidate the shepherds who are playing by the new rules."

M. Grange, the victim of the latest attack, refused to accept this explanation but looked uncomfortable when it was put to him. "I don't know. No one knows. I can't say more than that. This is the work of a maniac. That's all I can say."

Other local people were equally defensive. The renting of summer pastures (alpages) to graze sheep brought from the coastal plains of the south of France—a system called transhumance—is an important local industry. Many local people are involved, whether they are full-time farmers or not.

Transhumance used to be relatively easy work. The sheep were let loose on the alpages, the meadows just above the tree line, each spring. They were brought down in the autumn. In between, they were visited by shepherds occasionally. Otherwise, the sheep looked after themselves. The return of the wolf, driven out of the French Alps in the 1890s, has changed all that.

"There are many local jealousies and grudges," said a shop-owner, who is himself involved in the sheep grazing industry but preferred not to be quoted by name. "Some people have adapted to the new situation, the need to protect sheep from wolves, better than others. Some are very angry and don't think the wolves have a right to be back here, gobbling up their sheep.

"They think that they, the local people, are the victims. They blame

Lynn Rogers

ecologists and city-dwellers and think that they want to get rid of shepherds and sheep and fill the mountains with wild animals. Some of them are very angry. But there is a long way between being angry and going out to poison sheepdogs. A long way."

A local gendarmerie spokesman declined to comment on the suggestion that the dog poisonings were part of a pastoral civil-war. "All possible leads will be followed up," he said. "That's all we can say at present."

The sheep-grazing industry is an important complement to the income brought to the mountains around Valloire, high above the Maurienne valley, by skiing in the winter and walking and climbing in the summer. Valloire is only 50 miles from Turin as the eagle flies but it is a picture postcard French mountain town—the kind that you see briefly on the television as the Tour de France sweeps by. The 2008 Tour will, in fact, sweep briefly through the town of Valloire next Wednesday.

Normally, the coming of the Tour would be the dominant topic of conversation. Not this year. The dog killings, M. Grange said, have created a "mood of fear and incomprehension".

"My two young shepherds, who are aged 21 and 23, thought they were taking on a peaceful summer job in the midst of the mountains. Now someone has crept past their hut at night and poisoned the dogs of which they had become very fond. They are confused and scared." ■

Carnivorous survivors from the Ice Age

Wolves are slowly spreading west and north through France. Their presence, in small numbers, has been confirmed as far west as the Cantal mountains in the western Massif Central and as far north as the Vosges near Alsace and Lorraine.

The last of the original population of native French wolves was shot in the Massif Central in 1939. Wolves had already been driven from the Alpine regions of France by the close of the 19th century.

The wolf is a protected species under both French and European law. Around 1991-2, Italian wolves began to creep back across the French frontier. Attacks on sheep began almost immediately. Shepherds protested and claimed that the wolves had been deliberately re-introduced by ecologists. DNA tests on dead wolves showed that the newcomers were indeed immigrants from the native Italian population, which had never completely been wiped out by man.

In 2004, the French government introduced a Plan Loup (wolf plan) to try to pacify shepherds and protect wolves. A small, official cull of six wolves a year was allowed. Sheep farmers were given grants to create anti-wolf defences, including electrified night enclosures and a permanent day and night guard by dogs and "summer shepherds" (often students).

The plan has been a success but some shepherds still complain that the arrival of the wolf has disrupted what was a fragile industry. Wild-animal campaigners point out that the 80 to 100 wolves in France kill a fraction of the number of sheep destroyed by wild dogs, disease and avalanches.

Top and bottom photos: International Wolf Center

Middle photo: Rory O'Neill Photography/ www.rory-photo.com

Our Memorable Visit to the International Wolf Center

by BONNIE AND AMBER TAMBLYN

Bonnie:

After years of reading newsletters and magazines from the International Wolf Center and wondering what goes on way up there in Ely, Minnesota, the Tamblyn family (Russ, Bonnie and Amber) finally had a chance to experience, snout to nose, the Center and the wonderful folks who support it. We were fortunate enough to receive an invitation to see the new pups in early June, an event that happens only every four to five years. Our daughter, Amber Rose, is a busy young woman who has many invitations to support worthy causes. But she jumped at the chance to go see the pups and support the Center.

Amber has loved wolves ever since she was a pup herself. We had a big Alsatian-malamute named Joshua, and when she was young, Amber would cuddle with Joshua at naptime. He was purported to be part wolf from the MacKenzie Valley area

Amber Tamblyn and Grizzer observed each other through the glass at the International Wolf Center in Ely, Minnesota.

Left photo: Gene Ortiz, International Wolf Center

Bottom photo: Rory O'Neill Photography/ www.rory-photo.com

Russ, Bonnie, and Amber Tamblyn visited the International Wolf Center in June 2008.

of Canada. Sometimes at night he would be sleeping by our bed, rear his head back and howl at some far-off call.

My own early relationship with wolves was influenced by fairy tales, in which wolves were to be feared and slain. I never bought into it, and I thought the wolves always got a bad rap. As a child, I walked alone in the canyons of Hollywood with our trusty German shepherd named Lobo. When we were greeted at the airport by one of the original stewards of the Center, Mary Ortiz, sporting a fun wolf hat and a smile, I was convinced that I had met a kindred spirit.

Mary and her husband, Gene, were the leaders of our pack. We were delighted to meet the team at the Center's office in Minneapolis and awestruck at the mounted wolves on display. They were big and magnificent, and just the thought of meeting the real animals was exhilarating. The staff was down-to-earth and friendly. We had no doubt that they love what they do, and love the wolves of the world.

Our drive to northern Minnesota was mystical. And the farther we went, the more mystical it became. As the sun set through the rain-soaked boreal forest, a mist came up off the highway. Our imaginations went wild as deer and other creatures bounded out of the darkness into the headlights. Perhaps we'd see a wolf!

In Ely, we were impressed first by the breathtaking building designed to hold the spirit of the wolves. Its massive gray timbers climb into gables to create the form of a wolf at full gallop. The vaulted inside was equally impressive. Friendly and knowledgeable staff gathered us for our tour. We visited the *Wolves and Humans* exhibit, the *Little Wolf* exhibit for children and the large auditorium, where we first beheld the "ambassadors," a pack of four adult wolves in their natural habitat. It was hard to take in that we were so close to these animals that we could almost touch them. They roamed through their enclosure or observed us while they lay on a rock in a regal pose. We were separated from the wolves by huge glass windows, and the staff made sure that human interaction was kept to a minimum and very respectful. But the wolves knew we were there and were occasionally curious enough to come to the windows to visit.

At regular intervals, the staff would present fascinating programs, with speakers, PowerPoint presentations and question-and-answer sessions. The Center does a marvelous job in educating the public about the nature of wolves and their interaction with the human world.

And then it was on to the pups. . . Take it away, Amber.

Amber:

Like my mom, I grew up surrounded by and obsessed with the world of the wolf. Not only did I have all the *Canis lupus* garb you could imagine (still have a fluorescent airbrushed T-shirt of an Alaskan white wolf from when I was seven), but I also had very vivid and detailed dreams about wolves. They appeared in my dreams throughout most of my youth, sometimes taking on the representation of something to be feared, and sometimes something that nurtured. I wrote poems about wolves and made them the topics of any school thesis I could. They were my unspoken childhood mentors.

Fast-forward 10 years to my mid-20s, where I have carved out a pretty successful life for myself as an actress and author. I have been a member of the Center since I was ten, and for years I wanted to visit the interpretive center. Unfortunately, I could never find the time to do it. When I finally got there, it was everything I dreamed it would be. I had never seen a wolf up close before, but, boy, did I! Grizzer, the Center's biggest and burliest wolf, came up to me at the window one morning, and we stared at each other through the glass. My heart began pounding with terror and excitement. Even with glass between us, I felt the might of his wild presence while I looked at him with childhood eyes, and he looked at me with pure, unquestionable mystery. We stared at each other, nose to nose, for a good couple of minutes; then he trotted off. . . wolf-style. It's a moment I will never forget.

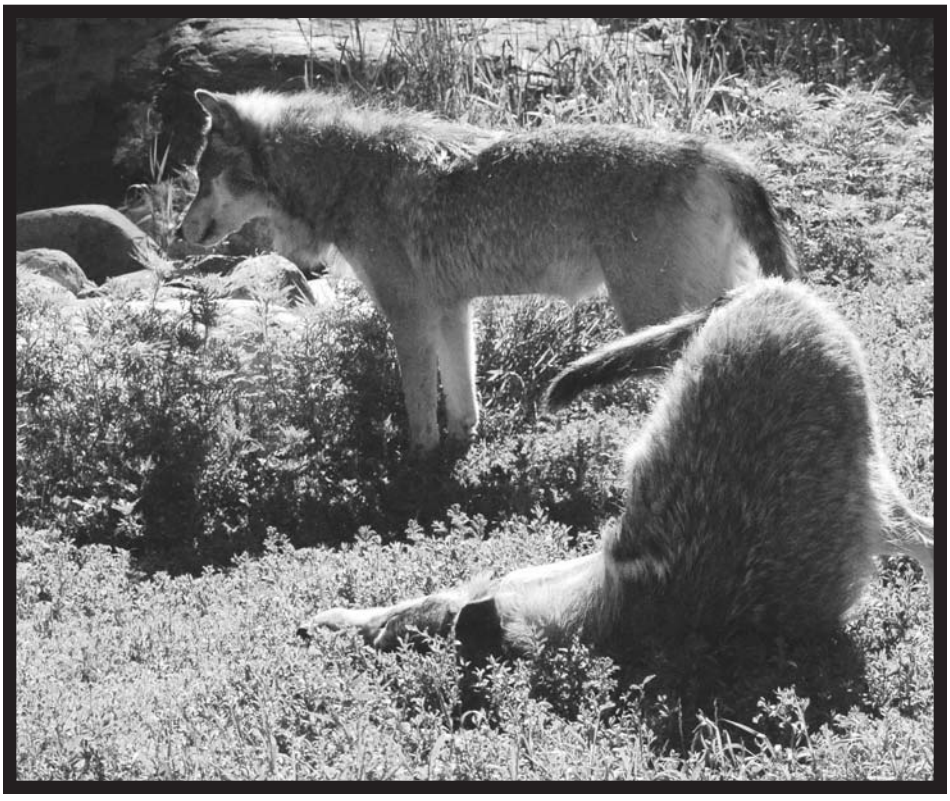
The next day I was invited by the *Canis* Queen herself, Wolf Curator Lori Schmidt, to help look after the wolf pups and bring them into the audience for a daily program. I was fascinated to see the beginning of their survival behavior patterns. Lori told me that it is in their nature from birth to be fearful of everything—it's what keeps them alive in the wild. It's how they are able to explore and learn to be leery of their surroundings. The tiny yet incredibly sturdy wolf pups played and peed all over the place, marking their territory and enjoying the new company.

Later that evening, we howled to wolves in the wild, waiting for a response, but they may have been secretive and guarded because it was pup season. That was my dad's favorite part of the evening. I think he howled the longest and hardest! We did actually see a lone wolf cross the road. Our guide and teacher, Jess Edberg, explained that he (the wolf—not Dad) had probably been expelled from his pack and had to go look for new mates!

We have so much admiration and appreciation for the Center and their devotion to the survival of wolves worldwide. Thanks to the Center's founder, Dr. L. David Mech, and his vision, I lived out a long-standing dream—spending real time with the beautiful creatures who kept me company through so much of my youth. ■

Bonnie Tamblyn is a multimedia artist and teacher. As well as a singer-songwriter, she is a council facilitator and trainer for the Ojai Foundation (ojaifoundation.org). She performs with Amber, and you can hear her music on CD Baby.

Amber Tamblyn is an award-winning actress, a producer and a poet. She is best known for her role as Joan of Arcadia and her film Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants. *Amber has a great love for the environment and its creatures, especially the wolves of the world. To find out more about Amber, go to http://www.myspace.com/ambertamblyn.*



Awen Briem

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Thank You

Tracking the Pack

The Passing of Generations, Summer 2008

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator, International Wolf Center

Summer 2008 was a summer of pups and a summer of firsts for the Wolf Care staff at the International Wolf Center. On May 21, 2008, staff found that MacKenzie, a 15-year-old member of the Retired Pack, had died. A necropsy later determined the cause of death to be a pulmonary embolism.

With MacKenzie's passing, Lakota remains as the lone surviving member of the Retired Pack. Management of a lone wolf, without packmates, is a first for the Wolf Care staff, who have made many management changes to ensure that Lakota's physical and behavioral needs are met. These include fence placement and walkways that allow Lakota access to the wolf yard and the wolf lab but keep her separated from the 2008 pups. The reason for Lakota's separation from the pups was concern about their introduction to the Exhibit Pack. Successful introduction to the Exhibit Pack depended on the dominant pair, Shadow and Maya, taking ownership of the pups. If Shadow and Maya had viewed the pups associating with Lakota, the introduction might have been less successful. Lakota does well with the increased access to the wolf yard and the increased staff contact.

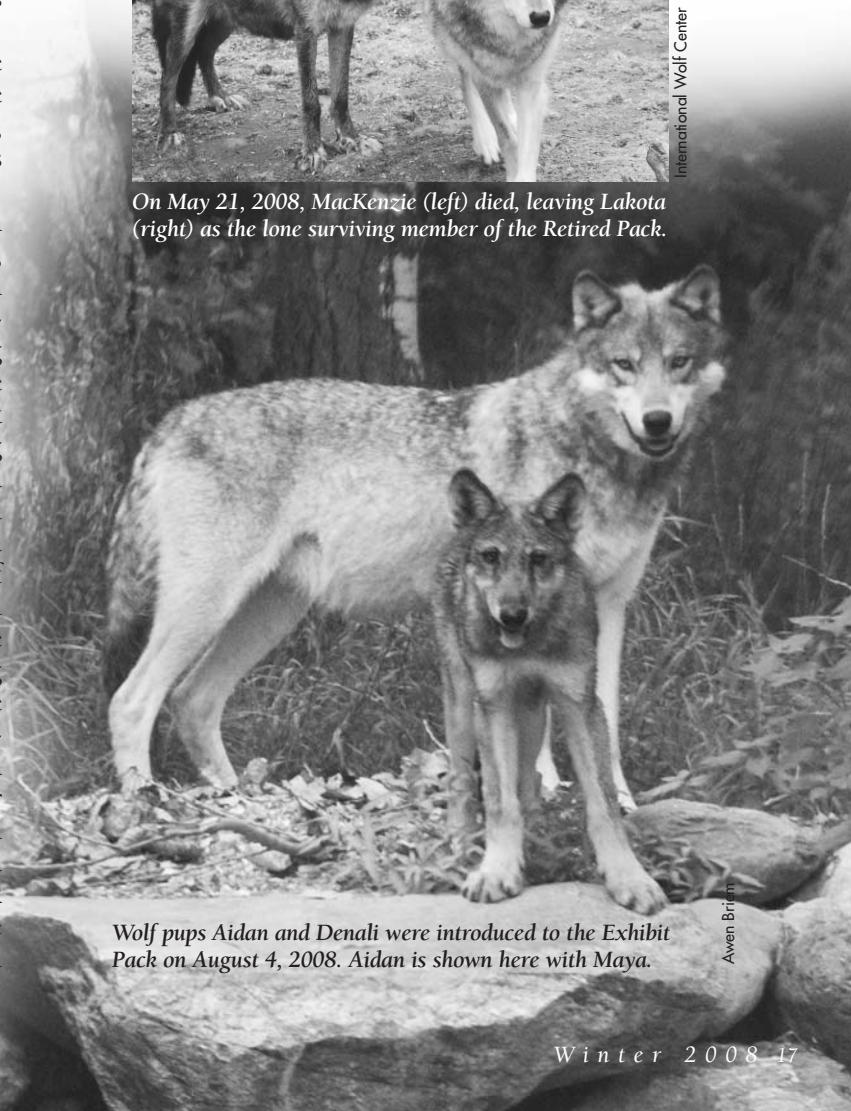
The other firsts during summer 2008 included the pups themselves, Aidan and Denali, two males born at the Wildlife Science Center in Forest Lake, Minnesota, and socialized to the Exhibit Pack at the International Wolf Center. The 2008 pups are representatives of the western subspecies of wolves *Canis lupus occidentalis*. This is the first time the Center has exhibited three subspecies in one exhibit, with three age structures represented.

Introducing pups into an existing pack of nonrelated, multiple-aged wolves with their own dominance hierarchy is far more challenging than into a pack with a single age structure. The dominant wolves always exhibit strong bonding behavior toward the pups, likely influenced by prolactin hormone and the social pack behavior of the leader. This parental role may last well into the pups' first year, but during the 2008 introduction, the subordinate males are playing a more critical role in the introduction. Younger wolves tend to move up in rank as they age, and because Grizzer and Malik are taking on subordinate roles to Shadow, we expected them to be more inclined to keep Aidan and Denali lower ranking as these pups integrate into the pack. We were surprised when Grizzer displayed strong social caregiving behavior toward the pups, and no indication of aggression.

There are no certainties about wolf behavior, but there is one certainty about the Exhibit Pack: it will be more dynamic than at any time in the Center's history. We invite you to watch the events unfold from the viewing windows at the Ely, Minnesota, interpretive center, through the wolf logs and webcam at www.wolf.org or by a special distance-learning broadcast to your school or organization. ■

International Wolf Center

On May 21, 2008, MacKenzie (left) died, leaving Lakota (right) as the lone surviving member of the Retired Pack.



Awen Brim

Wolf pups Aidan and Denali were introduced to the Exhibit Pack on August 4, 2008. Aidan is shown here with Maya.

Wolves of the World

by Cornelia Hutt

WOLVES OF THE UNITED STATES

The Return of the Gray Wolf to the Pacific Northwest

Northeastern Oregon has plenty of big wild spaces left. There is lots of good habitat there, a big prey base, a lot of places to roam and not come into conflict with people.

—Steve Pedery, Oregon Wild

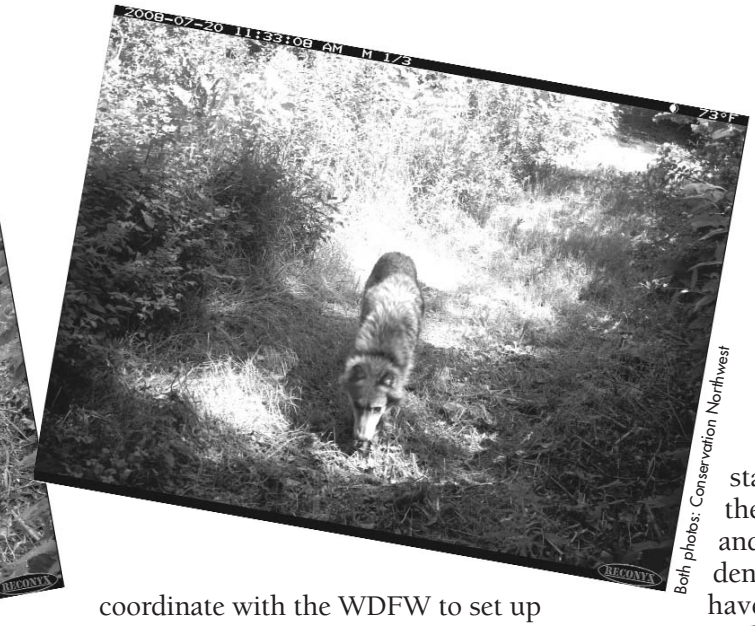
It was just a matter of time. Reports of wolves returning to the Pacific Northwest (Washington and Oregon) have been circulating for several years, but no confirmation of an established pack could be made.

Then in July 2008, the wolves won a doubleheader.

On July 25, in the Umatilla National Forest in Union County, Oregon, a howling survey conducted by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Wolf Coordinator Russ Morgan paid big dividends. His howls were answered by at least two adult wolves and two pups. The announcement followed the confirmation in January 2008 of a female wolf from Idaho residing in the prey-rich wild habitat of northeastern Oregon. Wolves are listed as endangered under state law, and a goal of eight breeding pairs—four in western Oregon and four in the eastern portion of the state—has been established.

Meanwhile in north-central Washington, reports of tones too deep and resonant to be coyotes howling have been making the rounds for several years. On July 18, 2008, in the wild Methow River valley on the eastern flank of the Cascade Mountains, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) officials live-trapped two canids: a male and a lactating female. They took hair and tissue samples for DNA analysis and fitted the pair with radio collars. The news from the lab confirmed that the breeding male and female of the "Lookout Pack" were indeed gray wolves thought to have moved into Okanogan County from nearby British Columbia.

The nonprofit organization Conservation Northwest stepped in with its Cascades Citizen Wildlife Monitoring Project volunteers to



Both photos: Conservation Northwest

On July 22, 2008, a remote camera captured images of a radio-collared male adult gray wolf (near left) and six energetic pups in north-central Washington (far left).

coordinate with the WDFW to set up four remote cameras. On July 22, 2008, they struck gold—or in this case, gray! Captured on camera were vivid color images of the radio-collared male adult gray wolf and six energetic pups.

Wolves have been absent from Washington and Oregon since the 1930s, and while individual dispersers have drifted into both states since the return of the wolf to Yellowstone and central Idaho, no resident packs were known to have become established until the recent discoveries.

The WDFW and Conservation Northwest are planning to develop and finalize a management and conservation plan for the wolves of Washington. At present, wolves in the eastern third of Washington remain under federal protection. They are also listed as an endangered species under state law.

Did you know...

one easy way for you to help us conserve natural resources is to make sure we have your email address! Simply email your address to:

office3@wolf.org

To view a photo flip book and a video of the Lookout Pack pups, visit www.conservationnw.org. The author thanks Conservation Northwest for permission to publish the photos taken by remote cameras of the Lookout Pack pups and the breeding male.

WOLVES OF THE HIGH ARCTIC

The Ellesmere Island Arctic Wolf Research Project: A Timeless Scientific Journey

One must understand the wolf in the wild to truly appreciate the animal.

—L. David Mech, *The Arctic Wolf: Ten Years with the Pack*

After 23 summers of arctic wolf research on the wind-scoured landscape of Ellesmere Island, one might wonder what more there is to learn. Why invest time and resources to travel for three days, weather permitting, to finally reach a remote base camp near a fjord where icebergs drift placidly in July? What's the benefit of filing the mandatory annual project proposal and keeping the territorial government research permit current?

All photos: Dean Cluff

The simple answer is that there is always more to discover, more to learn, more to confirm. The endless quest for knowledge about the natural world is the engine that drives and sustains long-term research projects like the 50-year Isle Royale wolf-moose study and the annual Ellesmere expedition. Wolf researcher Rolf Peterson said it well. "Science," he wrote in a recent article, "is a journey with no final destination, no definitive endpoint that can be anticipated."

Working in a vast, forbidding wilderness may sound alluring and romantic, but it isn't easy. Collecting data the old-fashioned way, with tools no more sophisticated than binoculars and spotting scopes, can be grueling. And the wolves of the High Arctic don't help out by wearing tracking collars. The landscape is immense, and if a wolf pack is not nurturing pups at a known den or rendezvous site, the researchers must search for clues throughout the seamless 24 hours of perpetual daylight. This means looking for wolf sign such as tracks and scats over miles of rugged terrain and scanning the horizon from windy ridgetops, hoping that something white will appear in the distance—something too large to be an arctic hare. It means swatting mosquitoes and staying up all night and sometimes all the following day as well. And observations must be meticulously recorded by hand.

The payoff for patience and persistence over the past 23 summers has been enormous. The data collected by Dave Mech, International Wolf Center founder, have been scrutinized, analyzed and published in scientific journals and in popular articles and books. The 1986 National Geographic documentary film *White Wolf* about this project is still popular. Because the family life of wolves in lower latitudes is almost impossible to observe (or was prior to the return of the wolf to Yellowstone), accurate information about "the way of the wolf" was hard to obtain prior to the Ellesmere study. Because they tolerate the presence of humans, the High Arctic wolves have taught Dave Mech a great deal about their social interactions, the raising and tending of pups, hunting and killing techniques, communication (scent marking, body posture and howling), sleeping habits and travel patterns. Additionally, he has recorded weather patterns over the years and analyzed the effect of phenomena such as early winters on the populations of prey species (musk-oxen and arctic hare).

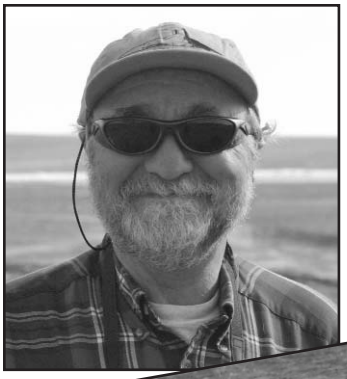
Join Dave Mech and Dean Cluff as they search for a wolf pack with pups on Ellesmere Island in the High Arctic.

http://internationalwolfcenter.blogspot.com/

Post your comments!

Dean Cluff

Some of the wolves came almost daily to the base camp, meaning they were traveling a distance of at least 24 miles round trip in addition to hunting forays.



Top: Dave Mech has collected data about wolves on Ellesmere Island during the past 23 summers.

Middle: In summer 2008, Mech and Dean Cluff found and observed nine adult wolves on Ellesmere Island. Three of them pause here to observe the researchers.

Bottom: Mech and Cluff (shown here) spent days of intensive searching before determining that the wolves' den was perhaps 12 miles or more from their base camp and situated across an expanse of impassable mudflats.

Top and middle photos: Dean Cluff

Bottom photo: L. David Mech

So, what's new in 2008?

This summer, Dave Mech was accompanied by Dean Cluff, a Canadian wildlife biologist. The upbeat news is that the two researchers found and observed nine adult wolves—the breeding pair and their yearling offspring and perhaps some older siblings, too. The breeding female was lactating, so that meant pups—somewhere! But where?

The downbeat news is that after days of intensive searching, Mech and Cluff determined the den was perhaps 12 miles or more from their base camp and situated across an expanse of impassable mudflats. But some of the wolves came almost daily to the base camp, meaning they were traveling a distance of at least 24 miles round trip in addition to hunting forays. The breeding female was a frequent visitor, too, even though she had to return "home" to supplement regurgitated meat with bouts of nursing for the growing pups. No one could ever accuse a wolf of being a "stay at home, play at home" animal, but this summer's observations demonstrated the truth of the old Russian adage that a wolf is kept fed by its feet.

The researchers were also able to observe some novel social behavior by using a taxidermy wolf specimen (affectionately named "Elmer") with adjustable tail positions. Mech and Cluff watched from a respectful distance as the wild wolves inspected Elmer and reacted to his presence. Cluff captured the encounters with the "intruder" on video and with a still camera, and these images will be analyzed for behavioral clues.

We invite you to a new blog to live the 2008 expedition day by day with Cluff and Mech. They sent daily dispatches from the weather station at Eureka, and their lively accounts illustrate the euphoria of discovery and the disappointment of dashed hopes as well. The International Wolf Center Web Specialist and the author of this article edited these journals and put them on the blog, highlighted in the sidebar. Enjoy the photos and slide show too, and please post your comments! ■

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

Dean Cluff

The Ellesmere landscape is immense, and researchers must look for wolf sign such as tracks and scats over miles of rugged terrain.

Alpha Legacy Profile

The Chance to Make a Difference

by Dorothy Hearst

The first time I read *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,* I wanted to get inside that factory, to sample sugar flowers and float down the chocolate river. When I received my invitation to the Alpha Weekend at the International Wolf Center,* I felt like I'd finally gotten my chance.

When I decided to write a novel about how wolves evolved into dogs from the wolves' perspective, I knew I had a lot to learn. From the start, the Center was an invaluable resource—from the informative Web site, to a wolf-watching trip in Yellowstone National Park, to the 2005 international conference on wolves. But I'd never made it to the educational center in Ely, Minnesota. Now I was on my way.

Ticket in hand, I arrived at the Center and was whisked outside to meet Aidan and Denali, the new, adorable members of the ambassador pack, and to hear Lori Schmidt's talk about the pups. We Alpha members then got an insider's view on wolf recovery from Dave Mech and Jim Hammill. During the weekend, we observed the pack devouring a deer, watched the pups snarl over a deer leg, and found wolf scats during a hike nearby.

But the visit to the Center was more than an opportunity to meet the wolves and gain insights from wolf experts. It was a chance for me to begin to realize a dream. My novel, *Promise of the Wolves,* is the story of a young wolf that discovers she is destined to bring wolves and humans together. But it is also the story of our relationship with nature. It's my goal to use the attention the book is getting to help wolf conservation and, thus, environmental conservation. I feel that I have a special opportunity to use my novel to spread the word about wolves and their important place in our world. The inspiration and information I received at the Alpha Weekend have set me on my way. ■

** Individuals who have included the Center in their wills or other estate plans and individuals who support the Center with donations of $1,000 are Alpha Legacy and Alpha members. Alpha Legacy and Alpha members are invited to an annual event as a way to thank them for their support.*

Jerry Bauer

Dorothy Hearst is an Alpha Wolf member of the International Wolf Center and author of the novel Promise of the Wolves.

A Look Beyond

Did you know...

one easy way for you to help us conserve natural resources is to make sure we have your email address! Simply email your address to:
office3@wolf.org

In Perspective

by Nancy Gibson

The future of our treasured natural resources is at risk. No news there. Those of us in the wildlife field see the flaws of poorly planned development, questionable farming practices, slashed wildlife budgets and the unmentionable surging population.

Are we on a collision course? Perhaps, but I am not ready to go down that path just yet. I am one of the few who welcome the gas price hike. It has made people think about where they place their homes and shopping malls and about modes of transportation. Filling the gas tank has forced new energy discussions, and finally, global climate change is in the forefront of our concerns.

These woes could give wildlife habitat a temporary reprieve from destruction. However, it is the long-term solution that needs attention. While there is much to celebrate about wolves being removed from the endangered species list, their recovery could be short-lived if we ignore their basic need for wildlands providing sufficient wild prey and secure denning areas. The public will fight for wolves themselves but tends to overlook the real need for their livelihood. Will we have wolves in 50 to 100 years?

This frustration led to a solution in Minnesota, but it is not for the faint-hearted. In Minnesota we lose about 100 acres of wild land per day to some sort of development. And 40 percent of those tested blue-sky waters are polluted to the point that they do not pass federal standards.

Thus, hunting, fishing, environmental and land-based organizations, often at odds with each other, merged to seek solutions for a common vision. The target was the Minnesota Legislature. The initial reaction in the legislature was that other priorities trumped wildlife habitat, clean water and park needs. But we who lobbied the legislature persevered for nine years and watched the effort go through an array of twists and turns in its political journey. Finally, in February 2008, legislation was passed for a constitutional amendment for citizens to decide whether to dedicate a small portion of the state sales tax for habitat, clean water, parks and the arts. The dedication would be for 25 years. The amendment will appear on the ballot in November 2008.

If the public passes the amendment, an annual $90 million will be allocated to preserving and restoring wildlife habitat with the advice of wildlife experts who will establish priorities for protection. That amount will be matched equally with funds to clean up waters, establish buffers, restore wetlands and protect drinking water. Another $45 million will buy parks and trails each year.

Citizens are being given an opportunity to make a major investment in natural resources and to put permanent solutions in place. Other states are anxiously watching. Minnesota could be not just a model for protecting wilderness but also a place for our offspring to experience dramatic memories of a moose in rut, or an osprey skimming the water or, oh yes, a chorus of wolf howls. ■

Nancy Gibson is a co-founder of the International Wolf Center and is currently on the board. She hosted the Emmy Award–winning show Newton's Apple *for 13 years and has won numerous awards for her work in conservation.*

Monty Sloan