



INTERNATIONAL WOLF

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FALL 2005

■ SPECIAL ISSUE ■

Frontiers of Wolf Recovery
SOUTHWESTERN U.S. AND THE WORLD

INTERNATIONAL WOLF

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Features



Michael Clough

4 **An Overview of the Southwest: La Tierra del Lobo**

The rich, diverse habitats of the Southwest, where the Mexican wolf was reintroduced in 1998, provide ample sustenance for wolves and their prey. Clearly the only significant obstacle to wolf recovery is the limits of human tolerance. The author gives his perspective on the past and future of the reintroduction effort.

Terry B. Johnson



George Andrejko

9 **Wolf Recovery Planning in the Southwest**

The wolf reintroduction program in the Southwest has made great progress in achieving the 1982 Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan's interim objective of a population of 100 Mexican wolves in the wild. However, there is a need to reconsider the big picture. How many wolves are needed to reach recovery? Where does suitable habitat remain in the Southwest? How is wolf recovery affecting local communities, and how might it do so in the future?

Tracy Scheffler

Special Issue

12 Voices of the Southwest

16 Sacred Cows,
Public Lands

20 Personal Encounters

25 Education About
Wolves in the
Southwest

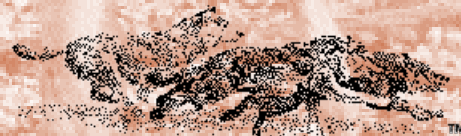
28 A Look Beyond

On The Cover

Photos by Jacquelyn Fallon (wolf),
and Tom Schwab



Jacquelyn Fallon



International Wolf Center

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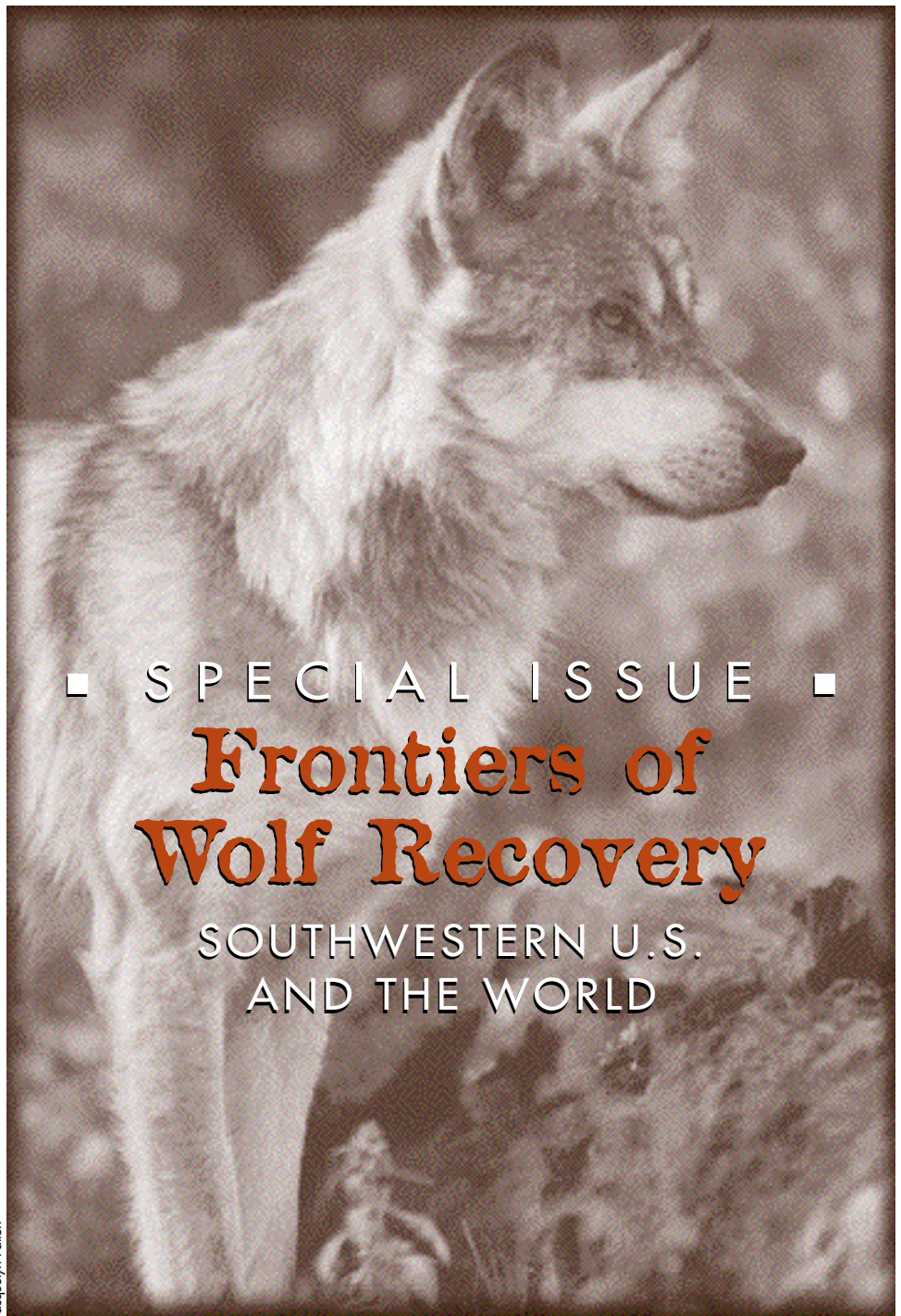
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Correction: A photo on page 1 of the Summer 2005 issue of *International Wolf* was mistakenly credited to Bobbie Holaday. The photo was taken by George Andrejko.



Jacquelyn Fallon

West Gate



Welcome Letter

Why Wolves in the Southwest?

by Dale Hall

The primordial howl of the Mexican lobo once again echoes across the canyons and mountains of the American Southwest. Universally feared and reviled at the turn of the last century, the Mexican wolf is staging a miraculous resurrection in a tiny corner of Arizona and New Mexico, a comeback that even the most ardent wolf proponents dismissed as unlikely as recently as 10 to 15 years ago. The Mexican wolf was the focus of an intensive elimination campaign by numerous governmental and private entities in the late 1800s to mid-1900s. Now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and various private, county, state, tribal and federal partners are cooperatively working to return this keystone subspecies to ecological relevance.



Dale Hall

The Mexican wolf is special. It is the rarest, smallest, southernmost occurring and most genetically distinct subspecies of the North American gray wolf. By the late 1970s, the Mexican wolf was on the brink of extinction. In 1977–80, the last five Mexican wolves were removed from the wild. These animals were the founders of a captive breeding population that now includes approximately 275 wolves in captivity and a minimum of 44 to 48 free-ranging wolves in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area of Arizona and New Mexico.

Wolves are often romanticized as symbols of wild nature and dependent on wilderness for survival. In reality, wolves are highly adaptable habitat generalists, capable of thriving almost anywhere there is an adequate prey base.

In comparison to successful wolf recovery programs in the Midwest and Northern Rockies, recovery of the Mexican wolf in the Southwest has faced a number of unique challenges. Chief among these is that captive-reared wolves released in the early stages of the reintroduction program did not have the skills required to immediately prosper in the wild. With time, some captive-reared Mexican wolves gained the necessary survival skills to successfully hunt, acquire and defend a territory, and breed and raise pups in the wild. Currently we have second- and third-generation Mexican wolves, born and raised in the wild, existing much as their ancestors did more than 100 years ago.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is fortunate to work with a dedicated cadre of partners (Arizona Game and Fish Department, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, U.S. Department of Agriculture APHIS Wildlife Services, U.S. Forest Service and White Mountain Apache Tribe, to name a few) in helping to recover the Mexican wolf. Critical to wolf recovery is ensuring that our other vital partners in this effort, the community of individuals that live and work in the area affected by the return of the Mexican wolf to the wild, are not needlessly burdened.

As to the question “Why wolves in the Southwest?” the Mexican wolf fulfills a unique role in the history and development of our country and is part of our national heritage. Of equal or more importance, reintroduction restores a significant component of a functioning ecosystem missing for over 35 years. Finally, it is a public mandate and responsibility held by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act. To quote Aldo Leopold, the father of the modern-day conservation movement, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community.” ■

Dale Hall is the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Region.

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An Overview of the La Tierra del Lobo

The landscape in the Blue Range to which Mexican wolves were restored in 1998 is strikingly similar to that once occupied by wolves in Durango and Chihuahua in Mexico.

Landscape image: George Andrejko,
Arizona Game and Fish Department

Wolves in the Southwest once occupied a land of unsurpassed diversity. At the southern end of the range, in north-central Mexico, rolling oak-studded hills and pine-oak forested mountains separated by grass-covered valleys characterized wolf habitat. The topography of Mexico's Sierra Madre Occidental and its environs was as rugged as the Mexican wolf was wild. From Durango north through Chihuahua and Sonora, El Lobo roamed at will from elevations of a few hundred feet to several thousand feet, although the middle elevations, perhaps 3,000 to 6,000 feet, were its stronghold. Water, cover and prey were plentiful, and the wolf ruled supreme.

Farther north, in Arizona and New Mexico, historical wolf country was similar. Oak and pine-oak woodlands were typical haunts of a predator that symbolized what some thought must be conquered, and others thought must live free forever. A striking similarity exists between the lands occupied by wolves in Durango and Chihuahua and the middle elevations in the Blue Range to which Mexican wolves were reintroduced

in 1998. In the early 1980s when I began to explore the possibility of wolf reintroduction in Arizona, I visited Chihuahua and Durango. Later, I studied the Clifton-Morenci area at the southern edge of what in 1998 became the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area. If the two areas are not identical ecological twins, at the very least they are fraternal. The similarity helped erase any concerns I might have had about whether habitat might now be a limiting factor in wolf reintroduction in Arizona.

Without question the landscape is more fragmented today than when ancestral lobos howled, and is certainly more densely populated by humans. Unregulated livestock grazing in the 1800s and early 1900s and shrub invasion spurred on by fire suppression and a warming, drier climate took a toll on the grasslands at 2,500 to 4,500 feet that is only now being partially reversed. But sufficient areas of forest, woodland and grassland, all reasonably well connected at a wolf's level of travel, still exist, so a run from the Blue to Durango is not inconceivable even today.

These rich, diverse habitats provide ample sustenance for an equally rich

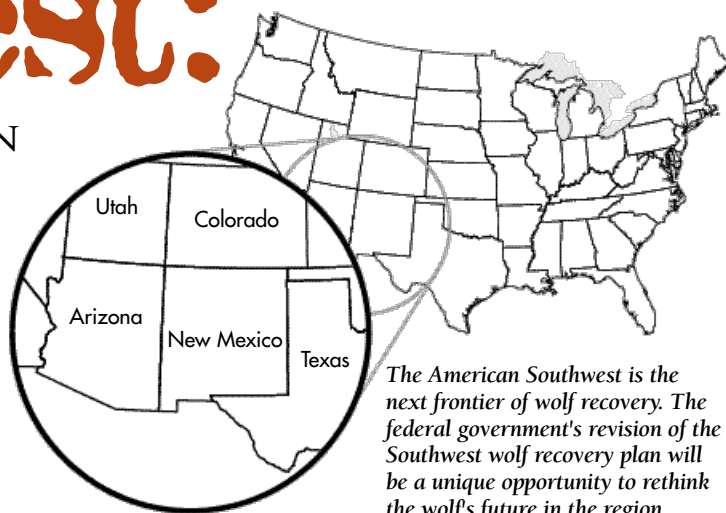
and diverse natural prey base. Whitetail deer are plentiful, especially in the south. Mule deer and javelina occur throughout the Mexican wolf's historical range. In the north, elk sustain wolves.

The wonders of nature notwithstanding, what most strongly influences the species' presence on the landscape is the human dimension, and clearly the only significant obstacle to wolf recovery is the limits of human tolerance. Are humans willing to share the landscape with a beast that doesn't yield to the dictates of mankind? Given that even a "wilderness" described by law today is seldom without humans, sharing is a must if the wolf is to be restored to nature. Human dimensions research consistently documents strong support for wolves among the human population as a whole, but what about the people who live in wolf country? "Not In My Back Yard" is alive and well there.

In 23 years of pondering and pursuing wolf reintroduction and recovery, I have come to understand that the noise emanating from the opposing ends of the "wolves/no wolves" spectrum consistently drowns out a silent majority. Most people are neutral, quietly accepting, or generally supportive of wolf conservation. But opposition to the wolf is

Southwest:

by TERRY B. JOHNSON



The American Southwest is the next frontier of wolf recovery. The federal government's revision of the Southwest wolf recovery plan will be a unique opportunity to rethink the wolf's future in the region.

as strong and heartfelt as it ever has been, especially among local communities most affected by wolf reintroduction. Facts and logic and generalities don't often persuade those who see their livelihoods and local customs and culture slipping away. The wolf is more often a convenient whipping post than a causative factor in such issues, but sometimes convenience is all that is needed. Unfortunately, agency management errors too often provide solid reasons for this sustained human discontent.

When Dave Parsons and I, in January 1998, accompanied the first wolves coming from captivity at Sevilleta, New Mexico, to pre-release acclimation pens in the Blue Range Recovery Area, it seemed the previous 10 years of work had finally paid off. Yet, as we celebrated, it was also clear the work had just begun. Then, as today, opposition was substantial, reflecting concerns about wolves as

wolves as decimators of native ungulates, wolves as vectors of rabies and other diseases, wolves as threats to human safety, and wolves as constraints on use of public and private lands. Elements of truth and fact run through these concerns, but none of these has the basis in fact that ardent wolf opponents ascribe to it. Nor are such issues irrelevant or insignificant, as many ardent wolf supporters suggest.

For several years before reintroduction, countless public meetings were held in Arizona and New Mexico. In many of the early meetings, I would talk with 50 to 300 people, most of whom were not enthralled with the specter of wolves hanging over their heads. But the discussions were always cordial, especially as the years wore on and many of us came to know each other better. We'd talk about people's concerns, what wolf reintroduction might entail, and ways to minimize impacts on local customs and culture. A congenial discussion would inevitably be topped off with home-

made cookies and assorted other goodies no urban store can match. Backcountry people tend to be polite, even when they do not particularly like what you stand for.

Unfortunately, in the first years after reintroduction that same level of outreach was not sustained. We lost sight of the reality that wolf recovery is not about wolves but about people. Instead of keeping in touch with the human dimension, we became more focused on the tasks of the day. We still had good information to share, but eventually it became clear that nobody was listening any more. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) three-year review of the recovery program (including the reintroduction project) in 2001 documented that disconnect. The problem worsened over the next year, as the USFWS failed to act on the review's recommendation. Thus some key partners decided not to wait any longer.

In summer 2002 the USFWS asked Arizona and New Mexico to complete their 2001 three-year review by con-



Probable historic range of the Mexican wolf.

Map courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Jacquelyn Fallon

Today, the management program for Mexican wolves is beginning to work. Wolves remain in the wild, a rash of human-caused deaths in 2003 was not repeated in 2004, or thus far in 2005, and the cooperating agencies are beginning to spend more time actually dealing with wolf issues and the public's issues.

ducting an independent analysis of the process and products. In September 2002 the states completed their analysis. The commissions heading their wildlife agencies concluded that changes must be made in Mexican wolf recovery and reintroduction efforts as they pertain to Arizona and New Mexico. The commissions directed the two state wildlife agencies to restructure the reintroduction project to ensure participation by the states and all stakeholders, to enhance the Interagency Field Team's capacity to respond to urgent issues such as depredation, and to address concerns expressed by the commissions, the agencies, and the public during the review.

From September 2002 through October 2003, the focus was on forging new partnerships and rebuilding communication with the public so adaptive management could work. Today, as chair of the bi-state adaptive management effort among six state, federal and tribal lead agencies and several cooperating counties and other agencies, I can cautiously say that it is beginning to work. Wolves remain in the wild, producing wild-born offspring. A rash of human-caused deaths in 2003 was not repeated in 2004, or thus far in 2005. Additionally, the cooperating agencies are beginning to spend more time dealing with wolf issues and the public's concerns than on figuring out how to trump or control each other.



Jacquelyn Fallon

In many ways, the Southwest remains a last great frontier. The pioneer spirit that settled the land is strongly evident in the rugged people who eke out a living ranching in an arid land rich with predators – not even counting the wolf.



Still, so much remains to be done in the Southwest that it is sometimes disheartening. The reintroduction project's budget is somewhat less stable than the San Andreas Fault. The legal boundary around the recovery area presents major challenges in managing wild wolves, finding room for releasing more captive-born wolves and translocating depredating wild wolves. Ranchers affected by wolf depredation are not satisfied with Defenders of Wildlife's compensation program. Drought and habitat fragmentation are affecting deer herds, and chronic wasting disease lies waiting in the wings. Elk herds are being managed to reduce conflicts with livestock. And wolves are often blamed for all of this. Elements of the public decry the money spent on wolf reintroduction yet also demand more outreach, more meetings at which they can express opinions, and management response levels and timeliness that can only be achieved by a well-equipped, well-trained, substantial field staff, all of which cost money.

And then there is Mexico. The very heart of the Mexican wolf's historical range remains wolfless, unless one counts occasional but unconfirmed reports. But that might change soon. Mexico is well along with a reintroduction project in Chihuahua, and planning more releases elsewhere. At present, the Chihuahua wolves are in a huge "escape-proof" pen on private land. If they travel north after release, the situation will become interesting. The southern parts of New Mexico and Arizona are not included in the nonessential experimental population designation that enabled reintroduction to occur in the Blue Range. So if a wolf comes across the border from Mexico, it will be fully protected by the Endangered Species Act in those southern Arizona–New Mexico lands. Might local resi-

dents who adamantly oppose wolf reintroduction and expansion of the current nonessential experimental population area become hoist on their own petard? It's food for thought, but we probably have several years to ponder it. Or do we?

In many ways, the Southwest remains a last great frontier. The pioneer spirit that settled the land is strongly evident in the rugged people who eke out a living ranching in an arid land rich with predators—not even counting the wolf. Yet, in both Mexico and the United States, rapidly growing urban and satellite communities are filled with people who have a thirst for wild lands recreation. Can these sometimes opposing forces be balanced in a way that the wolf's needs are also met? I maintain that where there is a will there is a way, and some of us will not stop trying until we find it. ■



Terry B. Johnson (pictured at left) is Endangered Species Coordinator for the Arizona Game and Fish Department.



Wolf Recovery Planning in the Southwest

by TRACY SCHEFFLER

Recovery Efforts for the Wolf

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has initiated three landmark recovery efforts to return the gray wolf to portions of its historic range. Wolves once again roam the western Great Lakes region, the Northern Rockies and the southwestern United States. Prior to concentrated wolf extirpation campaigns in the 1800s and 1900s, wolves ranged across most of North America from Canada to Mexico.

The purpose of the Endangered Species Act is to conserve threatened and endangered species and their ecosystems. Many conservation actions are typically necessary to improve a declining species' status, including land management, monitoring and research, law enforcement and public education. The USFWS is responsible for organizing a program to recover each species listed under the act, but it is only with the participation of many partners, from individual landowners to state agencies, that recovery can be achieved. A program for species recovery is guided by a plan that includes a list of management actions needed to conserve the species, criteria to explain when the species no longer meets the definition of threatened or endangered, and estimates of the time and cost required to achieve the plan's goal. When a species has recovered, it is then removed from the list of threatened and endangered wildlife (or delisted).

The USFWS approved the first plan for the gray wolf, covering the species in the Midwest, in 1978 and revised it in 1992. Recovery plans for the Mexican gray wolf and wolves in the Northern Rockies followed in 1982 and 1987, respectively. These recovery plans guide efforts to reestablish viable wolf populations through the protection, translocation, reintroduction and management of wolves in three



George Andrejko, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Approximately 44 to 48 free-ranging wolves inhabit a single recovery area in Arizona and New Mexico.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The recovery plan includes a captive breeding program from which wolves, like these pups, may be selected for breeding and/or release into the wild in either Mexico or the United States.



areas of the country. Thus, the wolf population in the Midwest has grown from the only remnant breeding population in the United States in northern Minnesota and Isle Royale, Michigan, to over 3,500 wolves in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. More than 800 wolves now inhabit three recovery areas in the Northern Rockies, in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho. In the southwestern United States the extirpated Mexican wolf has been reintroduced from descendants of captive stock, and approximately 44 to 48 free-ranging wolves inhabit a single recovery area in Arizona and New Mexico. Across the border, Mexico also plans to reintroduce the Mexican wolf.

Recovery Planning in the Southwest

Wolf recovery in the Southwest currently focuses on the reintroduction of the Mexican wolf in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area in Arizona and New Mexico. The program is making great progress in achieving the 1982 Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan's interim objective of a population of 100 Mexican wolves in the wild. However, the 1982 recovery plan stopped short of a full definition of recovery, and the progress of the reintroduction program and the USFWS's 2003 gray wolf reclassification emphasize the

need to reconsider the big picture of wolf recovery in the Southwest. How many wolves are needed to reach recovery? Where does suitable habitat remain in the Southwest? How is wolf recovery affecting local communities, and how might it do so in the future? These and other questions spurred the Southwest Region of the USFWS to initiate a recovery planning effort in 2003 to revise the 1982 Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan, this time including recovery criteria.

Experience tells us that recovery plans cannot be written in a vacuum; that is, the people whose lives are entwined with the species must be a part of the solution. Recovery is a complex process and often represents an intricate weave of scientific and social considerations. A recovery plan must have an objective, scientific foundation, yet it must be grounded in the social and economic reality of affected human communities if it is to be successfully implemented. For the wolf in the Southwest, this means involving wolf experts, Native American tribes, ranchers, outfitters and guides, special-interest groups,



Mexican wolves were loaded into panniers and carried on mules to the remote area where they were released.

state and federal agencies, county governments and Mexico in the planning.

The breadth and depth of information gained by involving a diversity of experts are rivaled by the challenge of participation by a wide variety of interests, especially in the controversial world of carnivore restoration—discussions are contentious, relationships are difficult to build, and progress can be slow. Meeting these challenges is a small price to pay for a recovery planning effort that results in local partners and the affected community understanding the needs of the wolf and voluntarily embracing the effort to recover the wolf in the Southwest.

Coordination between Mexico and the United States is one of the first steps in developing a vision of wolf recovery in the Southwest, given the wolf's historic transboundary distribution. The wolf is federally protected in both countries. In Mexico, the Mexican gray wolf subspecies is listed as endangered under the Ley de Vida Silvestre (2000), Norma Oficial Mexicana (NOM)), and conservation measures are guided by a recovery plan completed in Mexico in 2000. The Mexican wolf captive breeding program, managed by the Species Survival Program, is a binational program from which wolves may be selected for breeding and/or release into the wild in either country. There



Current Mexican wolf reintroduction location: Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area.

Map courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



are additional opportunities for binational collaboration, such as technical assistance and technology transfer, yet each country recognizes the need to pursue independent recovery goals and criteria relative to its wildlife statutes. Recovery planning in the Southwest should consider how the two countries' goals relate to one another and should provide recommendations for cooperative recovery efforts, including the establishment of a comprehensive borderlands strategy for wolf management.

Recovery planning in the Southwest must assess availability of wolf habitat north of the border to determine how recovery can be achieved. Similar to the wolf recovery programs in the Northern Rockies and western Great Lakes, more than one wolf population will likely be needed to achieve recovery in the Southwest. Wolves are habitat generalists that need large spaces, with adequate prey density and little human interference, in which they can establish packs, maintain territories, hunt and disperse. As we begin to answer scientific questions about how many wolves are needed to ensure the viability of the wolf, assessment of the landscape must also occur. Scientists must identify the most ecologically suitable areas for wolf recovery and determine whether recovery goals are realistic. Information about the subspecies' historic distribution patterns must also be considered. Before colonization, the Southwest was a mixing ground of several gray wolf subspecies, with the Mexican wolf being

southernmost in the United States and into Mexico.

As goals for recovery in the Southwest are developed, technical information about the wolf and its habitat must be considered within a social and economic context. Will dynamics between wolves and elk and mule deer affect the livelihoods of hunting and guiding professionals? How should local communities' concerns about the safety of living in proximity to wolves be addressed? How can ranchers who experience wolf depredation on livestock be fairly compensated for their losses? Answers to these questions should be used during the planning process to develop recovery implementation strategies that minimize the social and economic costs of recovery while still achieving biological goals. This is the most challenging aspect of recovery: there are no statistical models to identify the perfect balance between scientific, social and economic information; there is no chart to determine how much discussion is enough; there is no crystal ball to show us the ancient past or the distant future.

Beyond all else, paving the road to recovery requires elbow grease and an open mind—it takes a group of committed, concerned people ready

to tackle hard questions and even harder answers. It requires an ability to listen to one another and find an answer to the fundamental question: how do we recover a highly imperiled species that must compete for our ever-decreasing resources?

Although the Mexican wolf has regained a foothold in the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area, recovery of the wolf in the Southwest is in its infancy. The recovery team has invested a year and a half in the development of a recovery plan for the distinct population segment of the gray wolf in the Southwest, but its work is currently on hold due to litigation on the USFWS's 2003 gray wolf reclassification. The USFWS commends the team for its time and efforts, and we look forward to the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. ■

Tracy Scheffler has worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an endangered species biologist in the Southwest Region since 2001, focusing on recovery planning and implementation for over 130 southwestern species.

Wolves are habitat generalists that need large spaces, with adequate prey density and little human interference, in which they can establish packs, maintain territories, hunt and disperse.

How does the presence of

Tom Smylie, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Voices of the Southwest

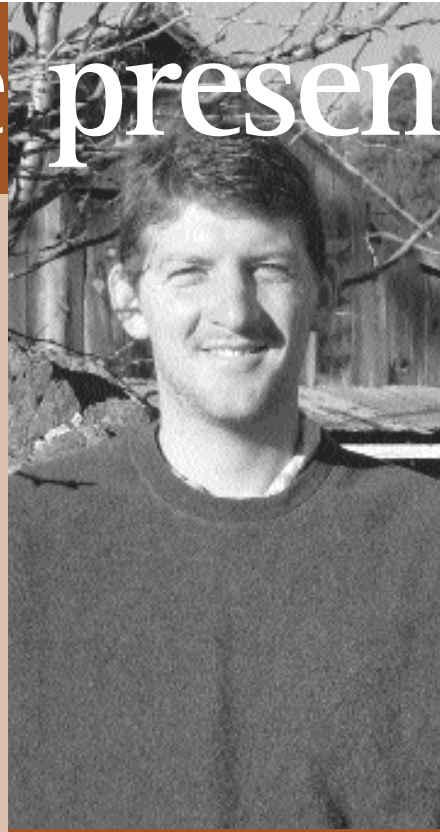
Wolf. Savage and treacherous. Evil incarnate. Hated and feared.

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

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

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

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



Becky Schwartz

Ethan Aumack

Director of Restoration Programs for the Grand Canyon Trust

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

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

wolves affect your life?



Chris Rossie

Bobbie Holaday

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

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

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



Dink Robart

Goat rancher near Alpine, Arizona

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

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

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

How does the presence of



Stephanie Coleman

John Oakleaf

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

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

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

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



Charr Grail/Animal Protection Institute

Michele Thew

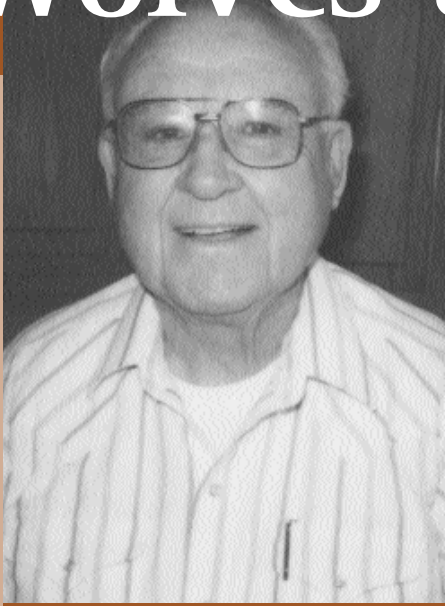
Chief Executive Officer, Animal Protection Institute

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

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

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

wolves affect your life?



Tom Woods

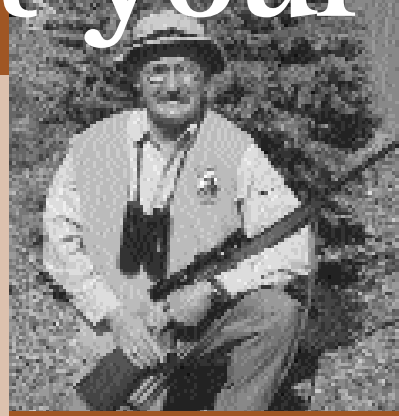
Former member of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission

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

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

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

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



Lisa Buechler

Dennis Buechler

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

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

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

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

Invitation to Readers

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

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



Federal Lands Grazing Allotments Are Vital to Western Ranches

by Bonnie Kline

As pro-wolf advocates clamor for more wolves and a re-wilding of America, western ranchers and federal lands grazing allotments are being targeted as the last obstacle standing between carnivore advocacy groups and pure wolf nirvana. Leveraging livestock producers off their federal grazing allotments will forever seal the wolves' destiny as they are allowed to reclaim their historic range and reign supreme, forever protected by the Endangered Species Act.

As the campaign to end livestock grazing on federal lands wages on, I wonder why farmers and ranchers are not launching a campaign to have publicly owned wildlife permanently removed from their private property? Nearly one-half of Colorado's 66 million acres are privately owned farms and ranches. When you take that into account, factor in the thousands of acres of public land that are too high in elevation or too arid to sustain wildlife year around. Couple it with the incredible rate of growth and urban sprawl that are permanently ruining wildlife habitat. Colorado's big-game herds have no place to go.

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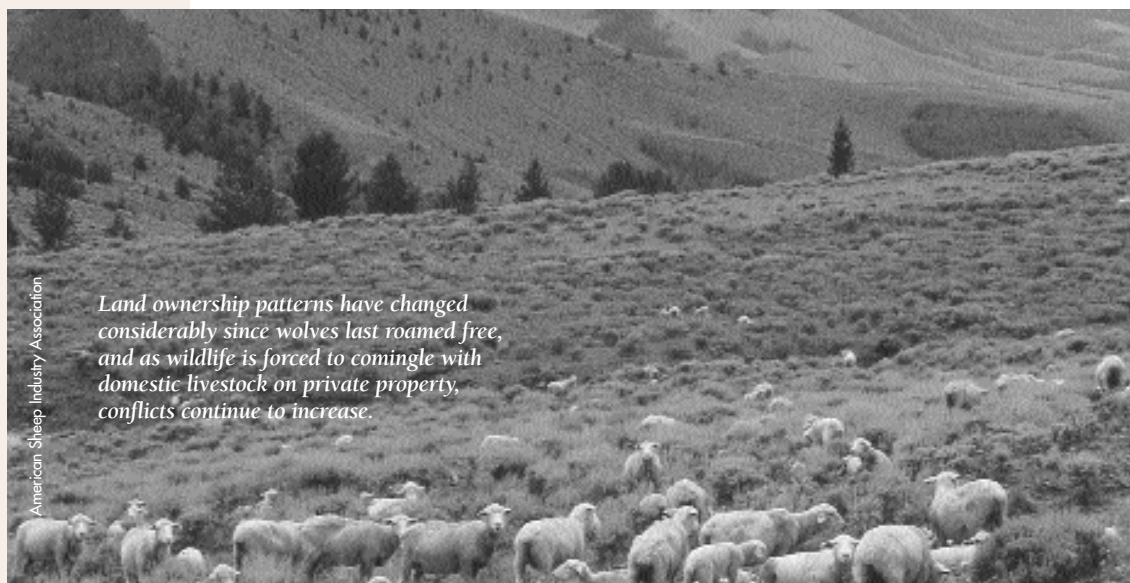
Sacred Cows, Public Lands

by Steve Grooms

Unlike other regions, where cattle are raised exclusively on private lands, in the West it has become traditional for ranches to run cattle on public land. This is managed through a permit process involving remarkably low fees. Permits are granted to ranches adjacent to public lands. Not surprisingly, those ranches have come to think of public grasslands as a normal part of their operation.

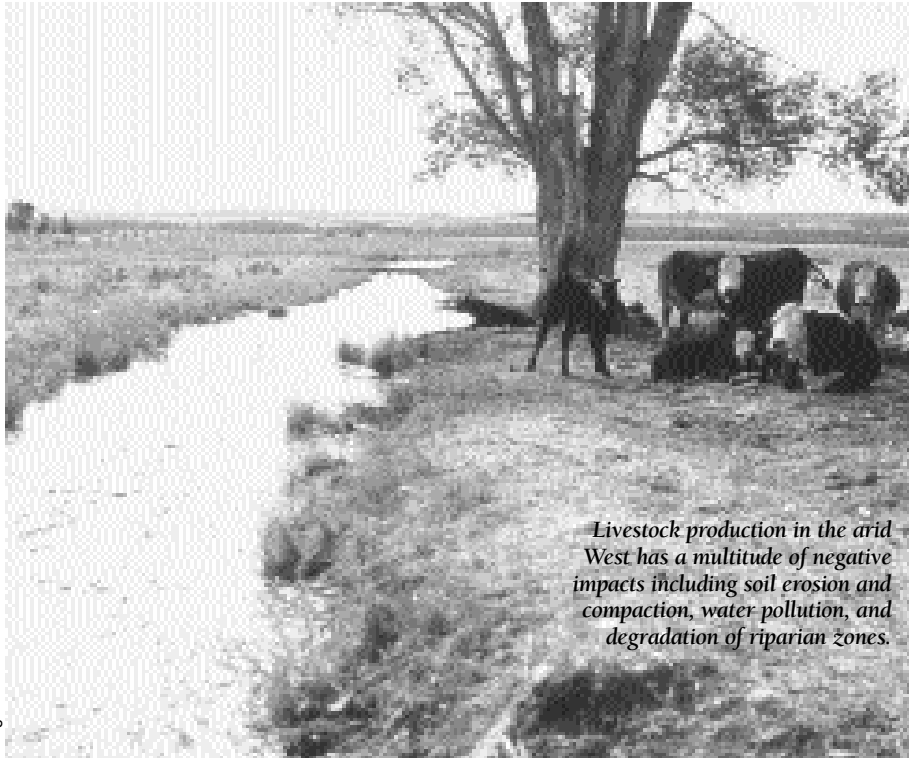
Nobody questioned this arrangement for ages, but that consensus has been lost. There is now a sharp controversy about the tradition of running cattle on public lands.

The dispute includes a confusing mix of differing values, so that the antagonists don't always address the same issues. Like other watershed management controversies, this one involves dramatically different ways of perceiving the natural world as well as disagreement about many basic facts. Like the debate about restoring



American Sheep Industry Association

Land ownership patterns have changed considerably since wolves last roamed free, and as wildlife is forced to comele with domestic livestock on private property, conflicts continue to increase.



Livestock production in the arid West has a multitude of negative impacts including soil erosion and compaction, water pollution, and degradation of riparian zones.

The Case Against Public Lands Livestock Production

by George Wuerthner

wolves to the West, at one level the arguments are as much symbolic as economic.

One debate is purely economic. Ranchers defend the traditional arrangement, citing economic productivity as the highest use of public lands. Critics argue that running cattle on public land is unfair to many ranchers and an inexcusable public subsidy to a few ranch operations.

Another argument is environmental. Ranchers claim grass is a renewable resource that they are using in a way that benefits society. They claim ranchers have been good stewards of this resource. Critics charge that cattle don't belong on arid Western grassland and are degrading a public resource, especially by overgrazing.

Values are also in dispute. Ranchers increasingly argue that grazing cattle on public lands is needed because it sustains ranching, a traditional and environmentally benign lifestyle. If ranches fail, they say, the land will be developed, suburbs and strip malls replacing open range. Critics charge that there are higher and more appropriate uses for public lands than lining the pockets of a few large ranch operations.

The debate includes several specific issues. First, do cattle belong on public land at all? Second, who has the right to run cattle on public land? Third, if grazing continues, what management standards should be enacted to protect the land, with what sort of enforcement? Fourth, what permit fees are appropriate? Fifth, can grazing cattle on public lands be reconciled with other social values, and what management protocols would further those values?

The debate has special implications for wolf fans, as the clash between wolves and the cattle industry has had major impacts on western wolf populations. The presence of cattle on public lands has been the most significant limitation on wolf restoration in the West. The resolution of this controversy will go a long way toward defining the future of the West. ■

Steve Grooms has just released the all-new third version of his best-selling classic *The Return of the Wolf*.

The public lands of the United States are part of the “commons”—lands that are held in trust by the government to be managed for the long-term benefit of all current and even future citizens. Yet one human activity affects more of that public domain than any other: commercial livestock production. Livestock production occurs on nearly 90 percent of all Bureau of Land Management lands, 69 percent of all Forest Service lands, and even in quite a number of national parks and national wildlife refuges and on state and county lands. These lands total over 300 million acres, or an area as large as all the eastern seaboard states from Maine to Florida, with Missouri thrown in. Despite the huge amount of land devoted to this activity, public lands provide only 2 to 3 percent of the forage consumed by domestic livestock nationally.

And while the profits from this commercial activity go to private individuals, the public commons are degraded, and public values are compromised. We suffer these losses so a small minority of citizens can maintain a “death-style,” not a lifestyle. Death-style because there is no way to produce livestock in the arid West without a multitude of negative impacts including soil erosion and compaction, water pollution, fencing of open space, the spread of exotic weeds, spread of disease from domestic animals to wildlife, changes in plant community structure, interruption of natural nutrient cycles, disruption of natural fire regimes, degradation of riparian zones, destruction of “pests,” like prairie dogs, and predators, like wolves, and the nearly uniform domestication of our public lands with fencing, water tanks, pipelines and other infrastructure designed to make our public lands better stockyards for the benefit of a very small subset of society—public lands ranchers.

To understand how much our public lands are compromised by the presence of domestic livestock, let's look at the issue of wolf restora-

continued on page 19

Make no mistake about it: prime agricultural and rangeland, winter habitat and open space will be sold for development if ranchers are forced off their federal grazing allotments.

Federal Lands Grazing Allotments Are Vital to Western Ranches

continued from page 16

I don't like wolves, and I abhor the thought of them killing livestock and other wildlife. I can't fault a wolf for being a wolf, or being hungry, or taking advantage of the easiest meal, which is increasingly more often cattle and sheep. However, I can fault wolf advocates who tell only part of a story or misuse information to garner support for their crusade.

Efforts to end federal lands grazing fall in this category. I have been involved in the livestock industry all my life, and grazing allotments are not some nebulous thing that I know nothing about yet want to take away from someone else. They are a vital component of western ranches and are based on owning commensurate property. Four issues come to mind when I hear groups campaigning to end federal lands grazing: (1) these groups refuse to acknowledge the benefits of grazing because it doesn't support their agenda; (2) the loss of federal grazing allotments will force the sale of many western ranches, and development and urbanization will become the dominant feature of our western landscape; (3) the West is not "infinity and beyond"; it is a finite region with a limited capacity to provide suitable habitat for people, wolves, wildlife and agriculture; and (4) ending federal lands grazing will not solve the conflict between wolves and livestock.

Grass and other forage are renewable natural resources; these resources coevolved with grazing. Properly managed livestock grazing can im-

prove grasslands and forests and control noxious weeds. Prescriptive grazing with livestock is more cost effective and environmentally friendly than herbicide application or manual clearing. Managed livestock grazing reduces fuel loads in forests, and sheep grazing is a proven method to help regenerate pine seedlings. Livestock grazing is used by the U.S. Forest Service and other agencies to clear brush and maintain firebreaks in certain areas. Stock water improvements on federal lands greatly benefit wildlife.

In the campaign to take away federal grazing allotments from ranchers and reestablish wolves on public lands, certain facts are mysteriously omitted. Forest Service grazing allotments are high-elevation pastures that are utilized by livestock producers during certain times of the year. Harsh winter conditions make these high-elevation allotments unusable during winter months. This is not only true for livestock but for large ungulates as well. When snow drives big-game herds down from the high country, they winter on lower-elevation habitat. In the West, much of the prime winter habitat for wildlife is private property.

Wolves do not stay exclusively in the high country; they didn't 100 years ago, and they don't now. Land ownership patterns have changed considerably since wolves last roamed free, and as wildlife is forced to comele with domestic livestock on private property, conflicts continue to increase. In Montana, 80 percent of wolf depredations on livestock are occurring on private property, and in Wyoming, 50 percent. You can



American Sheep Industry Association

Managed livestock grazing reduces fuel loads in forests, and sheep grazing is a proven method to help regenerate pine seedlings.

remove cattle and sheep from grazing allotments, but wolves will continue to follow big-game herds and continue to attack livestock. Research from Wyoming and Montana clearly shows that wolves do not stay on high-elevation public lands.

There are approximately 21,000 ranching families that utilize federal grazing allotments, and these grazing allotments are tied to about 170,000 acres of commensurate private property that provide wildlife habitat and open space for everyone to enjoy. Make no mistake about it: prime agricultural and rangeland, winter habitat and open space will be sold for development if ranchers are forced off their federal grazing allotments. There will be no winners. Wolves and wildlife will not win. Ranchers will not win, and radical advocates will be rejoicing in a hollow victory that will ultimately destroy habitat they thought they were preserving. ■

Bonnie Kline is the executive director of the Colorado Wool Growers Association.

The Case Against Public Lands Livestock Production

continued from page 17

tion across the West. My goal as an ecologist and advocate for public lands is to see the restoration of the ecological influence of wolf predation to the landscape. I do not believe that we should limit our vision to accepting as adequate a few “token” wolf packs here and there as museum pieces in a few national parks. I want to restore an ecological process that wolves perform—that is the influence of a top-down predator. And there is absolutely no biological reason why wolves should not and cannot be restored throughout nearly all of their native range in the West but for one obstacle—livestock.

Despite the supposed “success” of wolf restoration in the Northern Rockies, a closer analysis demonstrates that the only places where packs consistently survive without having their social structure disrupted by selective trapping or shooting or by having entire packs wiped out are those wolf territories found in livestock-free areas like Yellowstone and the central Idaho wilderness. On all

other lands, livestock is not only given footing equal to that of the public’s predators, but given priority right. If a wolf kills a cow on public lands, it’s usually going to wind up a dead wolf.

Even the so-called predator-friendly livestock operations are affecting wolves in three critical ways. The first is forage competition. There is no free lunch. Every blade of grass going into a domestic animal is that much less available for native species from voles to elk to consume. There are very few places in the West where native ungulates like bighorn sheep, deer and elk are at their true biological carrying capacity because the bulk of forage is allotted to domestic livestock. Fewer elk, deer, pronghorn antelope, bighorn and even bison means there is that much less prey available to sustain wolves.

But the mere presence of livestock affects wolves in other ways as well. Many wild species like elk are socially displaced by livestock. In other words, when cows are moved onto an allotment, the elk move someplace else. Again there is no free lunch. If these wild animals are displaced from what would otherwise be suitable habitat,

they are being negatively affected.

Finally, although it is not well known by most of the public, state fish and game departments often hold elk, deer and other wild ungulates to “social” carrying capacity, not biological limits, to appease ranchers. So political pressure from ranchers limits not only our native predators but also in many areas our other native wildlife.

There are plenty of other reasons besides the restoration of wolves to remove livestock from public lands, but restoration of wolf predation as a viable ecological process across the West is reason enough for me. If wolves can’t be restored without constantly being harassed, radio-collared, moved, shot and managed to death on our public lands, than tell me where can wolves be permitted to just be wolves? In my view, my public lands do not exist for the commercial private profit of any individual or group, and certainly not for an activity that so degrades and compromises what I believe the public lands should be doing—providing a home for native wildlife, free from undue manipulation and harassment. As long as domestic livestock are on those lands, our public lands will never be providing their full potential as a public “commons.” ■

George Wuerthner is the author of 31 books including Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West. He lived for many years in Montana, where he participated in wolf research and other studies.

Many wild species like elk are socially displaced by livestock. In other words, when cows are moved onto an allotment, the elk move someplace else.



There are plenty of other reasons besides the restoration of wolves to remove livestock from public lands, but restoration of wolf predation as a viable ecological process across the West is reason enough for me.

Personal Encounter

The Reality of Living with Wolves

by Barbara Marks

My husband, Bill, and I raise good old American beef on the Marks WY Bar Ranch in the Blue Range of eastern Arizona. The Blue is rough but beautiful country. The ranch has been in the family since 1891, and we're proud of how we care for the land and our animals. Our married children want nothing more than to come back someday to this ranch to live. Whether they can is another story.

We protested the plan to reintroduce wolves in this ranching community, but we lost, and the Aspen pack—two adults and three pups—were released nearby in July 2004. After the pups started attacking cattle and dogs in September, U.S. Fish and Wildlife wolf project officials captured them. But the two radio-collared adults remained free, making passes through the Blue area, antagonizing dogs and messing with the cattle. The culmination came in early April 2005.

Raccoons had been getting into some of our animal feed for about a week. Part of our dogs' job is to keep those animals away. On this day, two of our dogs, Rocky and Drago, had been going in and out of the house. They are top-notch cow dogs and our best friends, too. That evening, our three pups that are in a pen near the

feed storage building started barking, getting Rocky and Drago interested in checking things out. Earlier in the day I had listened for the wolves with the telemetry receiver the government had loaned us, but I heard no signals. Based on this and the fact that the wolf project had sent word that the Aspens were several miles away, I let the dogs go outside.

Bill and I were just starting to eat dinner when suddenly we heard the dogs barking. In the time it took to wonder what they were barking at, the commotion escalated. I jumped up and opened the door, nearly getting knocked down as Rocky and Drago burst into the house. Grabbing the telemetry unit, I rushed outside to check for signals while Bill got his jacket and flashlight to check on the other dogs that were raising Cain. After getting strong signals for both wolves, I went back into the house and discovered that Rocky had a wound on his nose, a bump on his head and a horrible bite on his hip. A very strong odor was on him. Drago had wet spots and a slight odor on him, too. Both dogs flinched with pain when I touched the backs of their legs. Never had I seen such terror in a dog's eyes before that night. I pray they never have to experience that again, and we are so grateful they are alive.

Bill came back, saying the other dogs and the horses were okay and for me to call someone in the wolf project while he checked on the cattle we had nearby, cow-calf pairs and pregnant cows we had brought into the fields on our property. We had done this to keep them away from the Aspen pack because we had been having problems—bobbed tails (wolves often tear a cow's tail off), calves missing, a cow that went off a bluff and cows exhibiting behavior typical when wolves are around. Bill found the cows near our house stirred up, and a calf was limping. The wolf project team arrived, but by then the wolves' signals were weak. That soon changed. The Aspens returned and remained nearby throughout the night. I heard them howl at 11:15.

Both the calf and the dog were officially confirmed as wolf attacks. Rocky was extremely sore, and we had to give him antibiotics and wound care under a veterinarian's direction. The wolves stayed close by, and we never knew what each night might bring.

We are not the first ranchers this has happened to on the Blue and in other places for that matter. Since September 11, 2004, there have been incidents with the Aspen pack. Two pups even traveled many rough miles to maim and kill several cattle on another ranch. Nobody can understand a situation like this until they experience it firsthand. We awaken

Wolves and grizzly bears were removed from this area because of their destructiveness toward livestock, their aggression, and their gravitation toward humans. Now the wolves are back, and history repeats itself.

to the dogs barking, our hearts racing as we run outside to check. The phone ringing at all hours, neighbors calling to tell us the wolves are heading our way. Warning shots piercing the night at 2 a.m. as a wolf approaches a neighbor's horses and dogs. Then we agonize, waiting for dawn's light and what it may reveal. This is our reality; this is life with wolves.

Others besides ranchers are affected also. Areas are off-limits to use, recreationists can't take the family dog because a dog's presence is considered a provocation. Guides fear for their valuable hunting dogs. Campers and hunters approach us when we are out checking the cattle, and they tell us stories about wolves coming into their camps and confronting them on hikes. We ask them to inform the wolf office, but they say they are afraid to report incidents

because if a wolf turns up dead, they would be the first suspects!

Wolves and grizzly bears were removed from this area because of their destructiveness toward livestock, their aggression, and their gravitation toward humans. Now the wolves are back, and history repeats itself. Guess we're pretty smart after all, because we knew this would happen. And we're the ones hurting the most. ■

Barbara Marks lives on the Marks WY Bar Ranch in the Blue Range in eastern Arizona.

Below: Barbara Marks' dog Rocky was bitten on his hip during an attack by a wolf in April 2005.

Bottom: Barbara Marks' dog Rocky and a calf a few days after Rocky was attacked by a wolf.



Photos: Barbara Marks



sixth grade... I realized what
I was...
eyes were staring...
100 feet away. And then, I heard
a muffled half-bark followed by
a deep, smooth, heavy sound rising
into the air. None of the other...

Personal Encounter

Learning to Live with Predators: A Rancher's Story

by Will Holder

I was blessed to be born into a ranching family. A ranch is so expensive, you pretty much have to be born into it—sort of like being a prince. So a lot of who I am comes directly from that piece of land. It's where I fought off frostbite and puked when I got sunstroke. It's where I developed a sixth sense about where rattlesnakes might be. It's where my dad broke his hip and had to crawl two miles for help. It's where my grandmother helped an Apache mother give birth. And it's where my

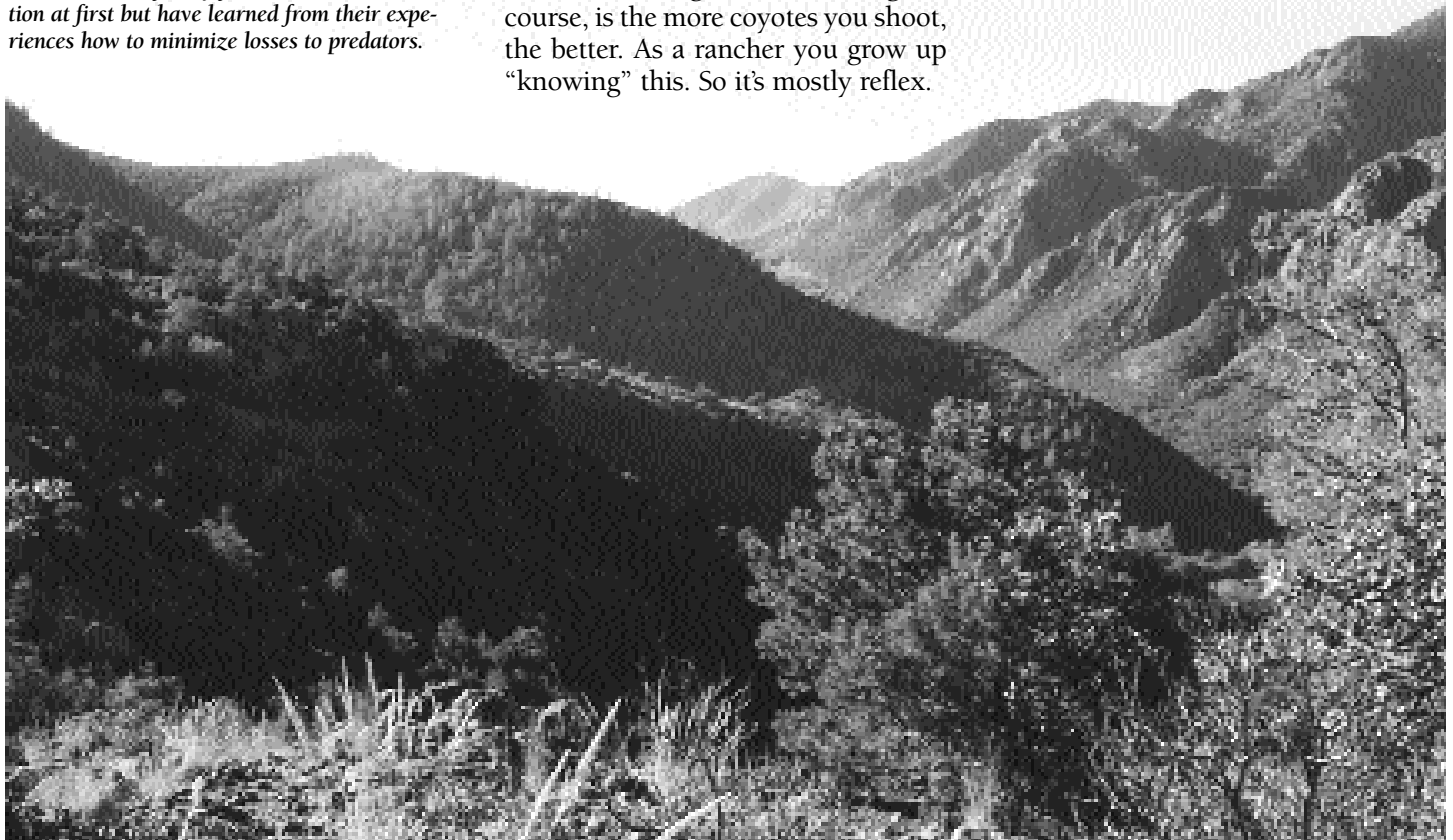
Wolves were reintroduced near Will Holder's ranch. Holder's family feared the reintroduction at first but have learned from their experiences how to minimize losses to predators.

great-grandfather killed one of the last native wolves in Arizona. It's also the place that taught me about the role of predators in our ecosystem. Like Aldo Leopold in his essay "Thinking Like a Mountain," I too had one of those "moments."

A neighbor's ranch hand was driving me home about sundown. We were approaching Bear Canyon, a travel corridor for all kinds of wildlife. So it was no surprise when we spotted a coyote loping along. We jumped out of the truck, grabbed our rifles and started shooting. I should explain that shooting at coyotes is sort of a culture thing. Our thinking, of course, is the more coyotes you shoot, the better. As a rancher you grow up "knowing" this. So it's mostly reflex.

But for some reason, on this day, reality hit me. As usual, we weren't able to kill the coyote (they're way too smart). I lowered my rifle, the smell of gun smoke still in the air, and a thought occurred to me. "You know," I said to myself, "My great-grandfather shot coyotes, my grandfather shot coyotes, my father shot coyotes, and we don't seem to be getting anywhere with this." It wasn't like the theory of relativity suddenly hit me, but it was similar. "This is just plain stupid," I thought.

This insight led me to explore predator-prey relationships. We don't have television at the ranch, so I did plenty of reading. Through trial and error, I stumbled on people who had come to the same conclusions. Aldo Leopold wrote "Thinking Like a Mountain" just north of our place. Ed Wilson led me to a study about starfish (they are predators), and how



Will Holder

We were simply in fear that the wolves would decimate our lives by eating our cattle, chickens, sheep, dogs and (for all we knew) us.

taking starfish out of the equation reduced in prey species. A study of coyotes found that killing them produces bigger litters of pups. Studies of mountain lions found that when you kill one, another lion will move in and kill to establish territory.

Armed with this knowledge, I approached my family about changing the way we did things. I love my family, but this wasn't something we could change overnight. There were slamming doors and loud talk at the dinner table, but the result was that we agreed not to shoot any more predators.

One of the interesting conversations we had was with my mother, who was raised on the ranch. As a girl, she had seen a calf being eaten alive by a coyote, and it left such a horrendous impression on her, that she hated coyotes.

As a boy, I had a similar experience with bald eagles. One day a friend and I found his horse dying from old age. It wasn't dead yet, but a bald eagle was pecking out its eyes and starting to eat him. To this day, I have horrible feelings about bald eagles.

I'm telling this, so you can see where these ideas come from. We're not a bunch of redneck kooks inventing stuff. We're just people who have unjustified fears—same as everyone.

About this time, the idea of wolf reintroduction started to surface. As a ranching family, we weren't too keen on the idea. It added another dynamic to the ecosystem that we weren't sure we could deal with. We were simply afraid that the wolves would decimate our lives by eating our cattle, chickens, sheep, dogs and (for all we knew) us.

Those fears might seem silly in retrospect. But they were real to us. And rightly so, because no one really knew what would happen when the wolves hit the ground.

However, the biggest reason we feared the wolf reintroduction was that it would be run by federal agencies. To our thinking, they had done a terrible job managing the prey populations (deer and elk). How in the world were they going to be able to manage something as complex as a predator?

As it turned out, we were right. They couldn't. But I don't want to put all the blame on them, because it's an impossible task. Ed Wilson at Harvard has a great quote: "The environment is not only more complex than we think, it's more complex than we can think." Some of the blame certainly goes to us as well. We're learning from our mistakes, but we made some whoppers.

After our family made the decision to not kill predators, we had our first big test of resolve. A lion had killed a calf. Ordinarily, we would get a bunch of hounds and go kill the lion. But we wanted to test my theory that lions kill to establish territory. So we waited. I had just watched a video of the

movie *Never Cry Wolf*, so I was under the naive impression that the lion would only kill (in the words of the movie) "sick and diseased animals."

Such was not the case in real life, as it seldom is. The lion went on to kill eight more calves—some healthy and robust. It was hard to sit on my hands while the calves were being killed, but that's what we did. We simply didn't know any better. But I finally had the bright idea to move the cattle about a mile away, and the killing stopped. Maybe it was dumb luck. Maybe the lion moved on. Who knows?

Through the years we've had similar experiences. Each time we have asked ourselves if we have discovered something or gained some insight about dealing with predators. Wolves were reintroduced near our ranch, and we have attempted to apply what we've experienced in order to reduce the risk of harm to our livestock. These days, we train our cattle to stay in one big herd, as opposed to scattering over a grazing area. When cattle are in one big herd, they seem to feel more protected—and maybe they are.

One example of the old "safety in numbers" cliché is a bit of drama that occurred one day when I brought the

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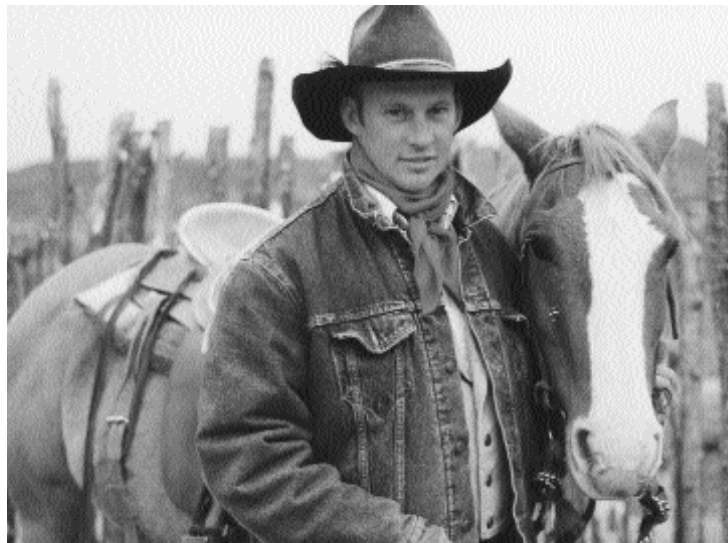
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cattle in for water. As they were drinking, a coyote came close by, and the nervous cattle grouped into a herd. This made them more confident, and they ambled over to sniff the intruder. The coyote didn't want any part of it and took off. This excited the cattle, and they began chasing the animal. I wish I had brought a camera—cattle chasing a coyote!

We also move the cattle out of areas where we know there are predators. You'd think the predators would follow us, but they don't. I don't know why, but for us, it works. In the past, we could expect to have 8 to 12 percent of our calves killed by mountain lions and coyotes. But since we've tried this relocation method, we've reduced our losses. That translates to about a \$5,000 increase in our



Will Holder is a rancher in Eagle Creek, Arizona.

yearly income—maybe not much by urban standards, but it means a lot to us. Is this method a guarantee of zero predator losses? Of course not. It's all pretty much trial and error and experimentation.

So how do we feel about wolves? They are pretty cool. If you've never

heard a wolf howl, you need to put it on your life list of things to do. And if you ever get the opportunity to see one, they're amazing to watch. They are so agile and smart, they make coyotes look like raccoons.

As I said at the beginning, I feel blessed to be born into a ranching family. It has given me the opportunity to watch how nature works its wonders. Ranching doesn't pay for beans. It's hard work, and all kinds of

things can mean a bad year or a series of bad years—weather, market prices and, yes, predators including wolves. It's a challenge, no doubt about it. But for me, it sure is fun.

Will Holder is a rancher in Arizona.

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Education about Wolves in the Southwest

by *Andrea Lorek Strauss*,
National Information and Education Director,
and *Jim Williams*,
Assistant Director for Education, International Wolf Center

Nowhere is the need for education about wolves greater than in the American Southwest. In a region where environmental politics commonly breeds bitter conflict and widespread confusion, it is not surprising that reintroducing such a controversial carnivore as the wolf has caused the lines between fact and fiction to blur. The eventual update of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's wolf recovery plan for the Southwest is likely to amplify the corrosive rancor. All who have a stake in wolf recovery have an interest in a well-informed public dialogue in which respectful, solution-oriented discussion leads to better recovery plans that have broad public support. The key to transforming the public discussion is education. An informal survey of experienced wolf educators in the Southwest revealed increasing frequency and quality of wolf education opportunities in the region.

In the K-12 school system, education about wolves is infrequent and dependent on teacher interest. The International Wolf Center has begun offering educator workshops to build on the educator training work done by others in the region.

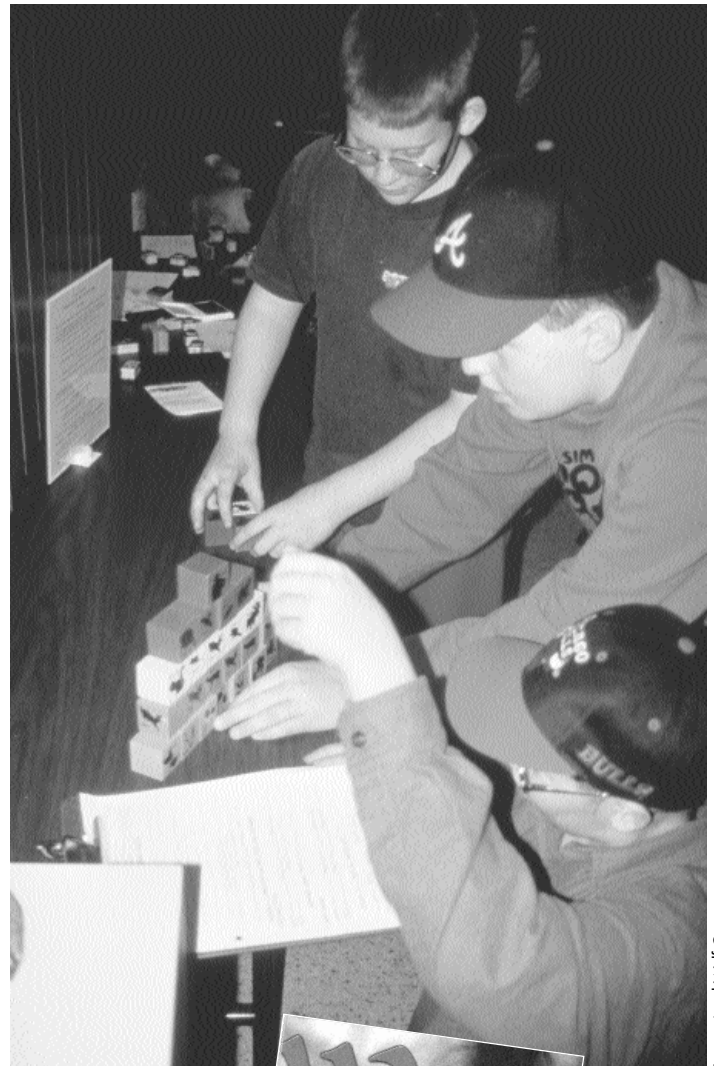
Wildlife agencies have informed the public about wolves through news releases, status reports, Web sites, hearings, public presentations and informal citizen contact with biologists who are involved with the reintroduction program. Outreach

Science education facilities such as zoos and museums offer occasional docent training and wolf-related programming for schools and other groups.

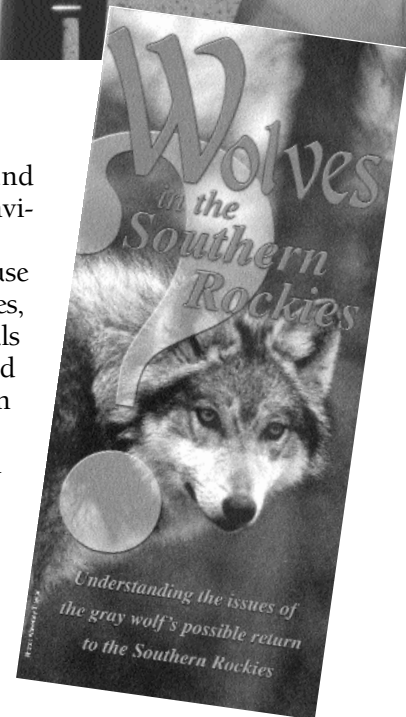
to schools through speakers and curricula helps improve general environmental literacy.

Advocacy groups of all stripes use newsletters, informational brochures, Web sites and fundraising appeals to educate their constituents and others about their perspective on the issues.

Science education facilities such as zoos and museums offer occasional docent training and wolf-related programming for schools and other groups. The Wolf Forum of the Southern Rockies is a newly formed consortium consisting of the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, the Denver Zoo, the Pueblo Zoo, the Albuquerque Biological Park and the International



International Wolf Center



Wolf Center, whose cooperative aim is to coordinate and provide wolf information a t i o n and education in the region.

These education efforts generally communicate basic information about wolves—their appearance, eating habits and basic ecology—and provide some introduction to the varying viewpoints about wolves. Many of these programs focus largely on orienting people to the details of the Mexican wolf reintroduction program. In most cases these efforts reach relatively small audiences who are likely to have an existing interest in wolves and wildlife.

Media outlets with their broad reach also play an important role in disseminating news and information about wolves. The quality of wolf information is widely variable, in some cases focusing on hardships experienced by individuals who have lost livestock or pets to wolves. Some

media outlets cover science issues relating to wolves and portray a wide array of divergent viewpoints, while others present a romantic view of wolves that gives insufficient due to the real challenges they pose.

Together these sources for wolf education have contributed to a moderately widespread awareness of wolves in the region but provided little in-depth understanding of wolf issues. Just as wolf recovery in this region is complex and challenging, wolf education needs to rise to that challenge. If people are to develop a deep understanding of wolves and wolf issues, then wolf education must do three things. First, education must scrupulously convey pertinent

science by addressing myths, analyzing ecological issues and adhering to high standards for truth and honesty. Second, it must impart the reality of living with wolves by helping residents outside wolf range to empathize with residents who face daily problems caused by wolves. Third, wolf education must uncover underlying sources of conflict by illuminating fundamental value differences among citizens who have a stake in wolf recovery. ■


Please visit www.wolf.org/wolves/learn/intermed/intermed_population.asp for an extensive list of Web and book resources about wolf recovery in the Southwest.

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We'd like to acknowledge the importance of our donors. With your critical support, we are able to accomplish our mission of advancing the survival of wolf populations by teaching about wolves, their relationship to wild lands and the human role in their future. Because of your sponsorship and dedication, the exciting conference "Frontiers of Wolf Recovery" will take place October 1-4 this year in Colorado Springs.

Thank you to everyone who has actively supported our organization, and an extra special thank you for those who have supported our conference. We hope that you all will consider attending the conference, and thank you again for your support of the International Wolf Center.



Jacquelyn Fallon

Thank You

A Look Beyond

What Constitutes Wolf Recovery?

by Mike Phillips

Significant progress has been achieved on behalf of the gray wolf since the species was listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) late in the 1960s. Starting with about 1,000 wolves in Minnesota, ESA-based activities have led to the establishment of several populations in several states that include nearly 4,500 animals.

While this is evidence of notable progress, success for the ESA requires that a species be recovered or delisted. Interestingly, the ESA and associated federal policies do not define recovery but simply indicate that it has been achieved when the definitions for endangered and threatened no longer apply to the species in question.

While the ESA of 1973 was the third in a series of laws aimed at protecting imperiled species, it was the first to offer protection to a species in danger of extinction throughout only a portion of its range. The previous two laws only considered species facing total extinction. The ESA defined an endangered species to be any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, and a threatened species to be any species likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

By including the phrase “significant portion of its range,” Congress elevated the threshold for recovery by establishing the expectation that a recovered species would be reasonably well distributed within its historic range, at least where suitable habitat existed. This expectation was buttressed when Congress defined the term species to include “any sub-

species of fish or wildlife or plants, and any distinct population segment of any species of vertebrate fish or wildlife which interbreeds when mature.” Thus, ESA protections and recovery activities can be applied to a population segment of an otherwise common species as long as the population segment is discrete, significant and threatened or endangered.

Since passage of the ESA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has effected 14 recovery actions. Not surprisingly, the species involved were widely distributed at the time of delisting.

Curiously, when considering wolf recovery the USFWS avoided comprehensive consideration of the phrase “significant portion of its range” and seemingly did not consider the precedent established by previous delisting actions. This is unfortunate, since consideration of both would have instructed the 2003 reclassification of the gray wolf (from endangered to threatened throughout much of the United States) and the 2004 proposal to delist the wolf in the Eastern Distinct Population Segment (DPS). Perhaps predictably, in January 2005 District Judge Robert Jones ruled that the 2003 wolf reclassification was illegal because it did not comport with the ESA and related USFWS policies. This ruling has the added effect of disallowing the proposal to delist the wolf in the Eastern DPS.

Jones’s ruling clearly indicates that the future of wolf recovery must be based on a comprehensive assessment of the notion of “significant portion of its range.” To ensure sufficiency, this assessment must be guided by relevant principles of conservation

biology, existing case law, previous delisting actions and a rangewide determination of habitat suitability.

It is unequivocal that passage of ESA in 1973 signaled Congress’s intent that listed species should not simply be saved from extinction but rather recovered so that populations inhabit relatively large areas of suitable habitat within historic ranges. Previous delisting actions suggest that at some level the USFWS is keenly aware of this intent. Case law is also based on this intent. For example, when considering recovery of the flat-tailed horned lizard, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals concluded that the text of the ESA and its subsequent application have been guided by the following observation by Aldo Leopold: “There seems to be a tacit assumption that if grizzlies survive in Canada and Alaska, that is good enough. It is not good enough for me. . . . Relegating grizzlies to Alaska is about like relegating happiness to heaven; one may never get there.” ■

Mike Phillips is Executive Director of the Turner Endangered Species Fund.



Jacquelyn Fallon