

INTERNATIONAL WOLF

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOLF CENTER
SPRING 2009



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FINDING THE MIDDLE GROUND FOR WOLF MANAGEMENT, page 8
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INTERNATIONAL WOLF

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOLF CENTER
VOLUME 19, NO. 1 SPRING 2009

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A gray wolf at Wolf Park, a nonprofit education and research facility, Battle Ground, Indiana.

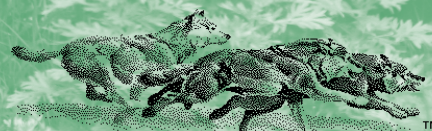
Photo by Yair Leibovich.

Yair Leibovich is a professional photographer who lives in Israel. He strives to educate people about wolves through his photography.

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

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Mary Ortiz Designated as Executive Director

Mary Ortiz has been designated as executive director of the International Wolf Center following the recent departure of Marc Anderson. The Center wishes Marc well with his future endeavors.

Her years of experience with the Center and her commitment to the mission of the organization make Mary Ortiz uniquely qualified to head a strong leadership team including Ely Interpretive Center Director Sharee Johnson. This leadership team will guide the Center through the current period of national economic downturn. The dedicated staff, volunteers and board of directors will carry on the vital work of the organization, and we all greatly appreciate your continued support. ■



Mary Ortiz

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From the Board of Directors' Education Committee Chair

A High-Yield Investment

by Cornelia Hutt

Nobody needs a reminder that big dividends are on the endangered dollars list, but the International Wolf Center is still a high-yield investment. The current and future state of the economy has us all punching new holes in family budget belts as we prioritize our spending. Nonprofits that rely on the generosity of members to sustain their missions are being scrutinized and their merits evaluated. Are we returning real value for the dollars you invest in our work?

The Center is feeling the crunch, too, and we are tightening our organizational belt. But our enthusiasm for our work is higher than ever because what we do matters. And we are confident it matters to you as well.

We are on the lookout for creative sources of funding to keep our budget healthy and to implement our wolf education programs. Our 2008 fall donation appeal took on a special urgency, even though sticking to our guiding principle of projecting a balanced, factual view of wolves means bypassing the gold that can be mined from highly emotional pleas, laced with hyperbole and half-truths.

We have some ideas for bolstering the bottom line, and we would welcome your input as well. Watch for challenges on our Web site (www.wolf.org), which is being redesigned and given a face-lift. The site recently received the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits' highest recognition, but we are setting the bar higher still! The site will offer easier access to basic wolf information, continued breaking news bulletins, a menu of interactive activities, fresh resources for educators and wolf lovers everywhere, and up-to-date information about management challenges as wolves live ever closer to humans.

What can you do? Give the gift of a membership to someone who is celebrating a birthday or a special event. And if the situation arises, memorial gifts are a powerful way to recognize the values and passions of your loved one. Check out the affordable adventure trips on the Web site, and don't forget to shop online at the Wolf Den Store. Dozens of new items are featured, and ordering is easier than ever! And of course, plan a visit to the interpretive center in Ely, Minnesota. Been there, done that? You'll be surprised and excited by the changes underway and by the new welcoming committee—fast-growing pups!

The recent death of Lakota marked the end of a deep connection for many people to the Center's founding ambassador wolves. This issue contains a tribute to Lakota, and the Center's YouTube channel features a heart-lifting slide show (<http://www.youtube.com/user/IntlWolfCenter>). But hope is born of small things, and the advent of the two pups in summer 2008 ushered in a new era in the vibrant life of the Center. We will continue to focus on our mission to advocate for wolves and wildlands through education. One token of our appreciation for your support is this magazine, which according to a recent survey, our members read from cover to cover and rate with high marks.

Thanks to all of you! ■

Cornelia H. Hutt

International Wolf Center

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Living on Tundra Time

Text and photos by
CHRIS SENIOR

On their flight to Aylmer Lake, trip participants could see the lakes and rivers of the tundra interspersed across the land.



**There are two kinds of adventurers:
those who go**

I'm suddenly awakened by a flashlight shining directly into my eyes, making it impossible to see anything else. It is the voice behind the light, however, that has commanded my complete attention. "Chris! There's a wolf outside the cabin!" I grab clothes and camera and race out into total darkness. And in a pool of illumination from the flashlight, I see her—a beautiful, white female wolf, calmly trotting between our cabins, seemingly unconcerned at both our presence and our excitement. It is only 1:00 in the morning, and this is the start of a day filled with wolves and wonder. . . .

I've come to Aylmer Lake in Canada's Northwest Territories with the August 2008 trip organized by the International Wolf Center. There are 15 of us, all with our own hopes and aspirations for this adventure to the largest wilderness left on the planet. Trip leaders Dave Mech, Nancy Gibson, Neil Hutt and Canadian biologist Dean Cluff are here to ensure that we intrepid tourists have a great time, learn something about the abundant wildlife, and aren't a nuisance to any of it either!

We all meet up in Yellowknife, capital of the Northwest Territories, on the shore of Great Slave Lake. From there, a noisy flight some 240 miles north-northeast in a Twin Otter floatplane brings us to Aylmer Lake Lodge, a destination so remote that it can only be reached by air. The facilities are basic in order to keep impact on the environment to a

Trip participant Karina Huang ready with a scope to view wolves and other wildlife.

truly hoping to find adventure and those who



go secretly hoping they won't.

—Rabindranath Tagore

minimum, but the bunkhouses are cozy, and the lodge provides a central point to meet, talk, eat the delicious food provided for us, and look out at the local wildlife.

And the scenery is simply stunning. I watch the last of the trees fade out during the early-morning flight as we head up north of the tree line and into a landscape of tundra, where the land is covered only in small shrubs, grasses, mosses and lichens. Lakes and rivers are interspersed across the land, and in this early light, the water glows like molten gold. Linking both land and water are embankments called eskers. These were formed by rivers flowing within the glaciers that once covered the land, which left behind their sediment of sand and gravel as the ice walls melted away. Their loose construction, in a land where all else is solid rock or water, allows them to be much used by wolves as den sites.

In this fresh, strangely silent landscape, even my footfalls seem crude and intrusive. The silence really is deafening, and those few sounds present are distinct: the water lapping against the shore, an occasional song from the few birds present, insects buzzing, the wind blowing over a rock. These sounds are all separate, something to savor and relish, not the cacophony of near-constant noise that we are all subjected to in our daily lives. To quote a favorite author, a man could be driven to commit philosophy, and I am guilty of this on frequent occasions.

As if this landscape of beautiful desolation and silence is not enough, there is wildlife to be seen at almost every turn. As soon as we leave the

confines of the plane and walk toward our new home, sik-siks—arctic ground squirrels—pop up to see us. They are so used to humans from eating the generous supplies of peanuts put out for them by our hosts, Alan and Kathy Rebane, that they will take nuts from fingers and even visit a friendly lap.

My mind and senses are still trying to cope with the sheer scale of this new land. An all-encompassing sky, with no tree cover or other shelter, gives the impression that everything that happens here is subject to scrutiny, leaving no room for lies or falsehoods. And yet, despite that feeling, there is also the sense of splendid isolation, of

being separated from the rest of humanity for this short time.

Dean asks for a single volunteer to take a 45-minute boat ride down Aylmer Lake to a place called the Narrows so we can check a known den site. I'm lucky enough to form part of this advance scouting party. Out on the water, senses reel again as water and sky meet in places, giving brief feelings that I am suspended inside a huge bubble. Back to practical matters, we find plenty of paw prints and other signs of recent occupation at the site. This is significant, as no wolves were seen at all the previous year, and the tracks offer hope that we may catch sight of the local inhabitants.



Above: Dave Mech and Debbie Hinchcliffe examine a wolf den that has been unused for several years.

Left: Sik-siks, or arctic ground squirrels, are so used to humans at Aylmer Lake that they will take nuts from fingers.

Every change in viewpoint reveals some

subtle difference to be appreciated—

this place is never boring.



Sunset of the first day finds us all up on the ridge behind the lodge, scopes and cameras ready for wolves or any other creatures that care to visit, but we see only blackflies and mosquitoes, and close enough not to require scopes! The sunset is spectacular—here, each one is, while all being utterly different—and no one is anything less than content as we head down to our bunks.

So, the week continues. We are here to watch wildlife, but just being in this remote place, knowing that wolves, caribou, barren-ground grizzlies, arctic hares, peregrine falcons, and all the others are around—somewhere—makes the landscape seem alive, even when nothing moves. Not that we don't look hard, searching by foot and boat, pausing to admire the scenery and chomp on 10,000-year-old glacial ice,

its compacted layers visible against sunlight. Every change in viewpoint reveals some subtle difference to be appreciated—this place is never boring. Just to be out here, surrounded by pristine air and water, is a privilege for all my senses to savor. The wet sand shows up more wolf tracks in transient detail, but we are being taught patience in this benign wolf hunt.

This far north there are maybe only four hours of total darkness each night, and we all enjoy the long hours of daylight, to see and experience all that we can. One night brings its own treat, too. The northern lights give us a show in greens, whites and reds. This unearthly glow brings appropriate oohs and aahs from us, especially with a side order of meteors from the Perseids shower thrown in for good measure: Even the night is full of wonder here.

We do finally see our first wolves, at the end of the day as we head back to our boats, after spending hours watching wolf rocks, caribou rocks and even musk-ox rocks: It is amazing how the eye can play tricks. But here, so close to our group, a beautiful, mature female walks. She is joined by a younger, more nervous male, who remains up on the ridge, keeping his distance.

Being suddenly awakened by the flashlight that night is only the start of a remarkable day of wolf encounters, with the female visiting the lodge again as we are getting ready to eat breakfast, walking around a mere few meters away. This is beyond our wildest imaginings for the trip, and seeing her staring right down my camera lens leaves images in my mind

that render those from the camera almost perfunctory. She's only here, in our space, because she chooses to be, and I feel that if I blink or even breathe, it will all disappear like some vivid but quick-forgotten dream. So I savor the moment, locking those few minutes into my mind.

We spend much time viewing these two wolves from the catered comfort of the lodge. Another male also joins them on one occasion. How great this is—we point our scopes and cameras through the windows and eat meals in between. And we thought that wildlife biologists had a hard life! The only person less than impressed is Kathy, her lovingly prepared meals constantly interrupted by our rushing in and out of doors, to get a better view of the latest happenings.

Supporting cast members of this wildlife play decide that the wolves aren't going to have the stage to themselves. We spot a musk-ox across the water and also a lone caribou from the 128,000-strong Bathurst herd. This herd is due to migrate across the area, passing south to its winter range, but only this single representative is evident. A peregrine falcon hunts near the beach, showing the most incredible aerobatics, while a bald eagle and the female wolf have a small dispute in almost the same spot the next day. And I don't even mind missing the glimpse of a wolverine as I am out hiking elsewhere. It is impossible to be everywhere, and I never feel fully connected with any landscape unless I have experienced it on foot, each step bringing me closer to the land itself.

Since the trip, I often describe this place as barren but in a positive



Trip participants spotted a lone caribou from the 128,000-strong Bathurst herd.

sense, with no human influence save for our lodge on the lake. This open landscape, full of sky and water, seems to draw you in, invite you to sail around the next bit of land, or walk up one more ridge, just to see what awaits beyond . . . and beyond that. It is bleak but never boring, full of life both in the vegetation and animals that abound here, swallowed into this huge space. There are possible threats to this, however. The same geology that stuns me also houses gold and diamonds deep within itself. Many consider these to be more precious than the wilderness, but standing on an esker, feeling the breeze, listening to deafening silence interspersed with occasional sounds, I know that this is wrong. This last great wilderness must remain, unspoiled and truly wild, for if we lose this, we lose something infinitely more precious and utterly irreplaceable. ■

Chris Senior works in digital mapping, or GIS, for UK-based environmental organizations. He is a writer and avid photographer and traveler. He lives in South Yorkshire, England. For a photo journey of the 2008 trip to Aylmer Lake, visit Chris's Web site at http://www.pbase.com/pawsforthought/canada_nwt.



After hours of watching for wolves, the participants in the International Wolf Center's 2008 trip to Aylmer Lake were finally able to observe a pair of wolves.



On occasion, the wolves could be watched from the catered comfort of the lodge, with scopes and cameras providing close-up views.



Management of Wolves in the Western Great Lakes:

Is There a Middle Ground?

A combined population exceeding 4,000 wolves now lives in Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

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 plaintiffs say that under state management the species' long-term survival remains in doubt in part because of hunting of wolves. Although the authors of the following articles take different positions on issues related to hunting of wolves, they are agreed that a solution to the conflict over wolf management lies in finding the middle ground between the extremes of opinions that too often drive the decision making.

Where from Here?

by Jim Hammill

The ruling by a federal court judge in September 2008 to return Midwest wolves to endangered status had nothing to do with the court's concern for wolf populations in the Western Great Lakes distinct population segment. Likewise, the ruling had nothing to say about state management authority versus federal oversight of wolves. Instead, the ruling was based on procedural weaknesses in the Endangered Species Act (ESA) itself. The judicial tug of war that has become wolf management in the

United States has exposed the weaknesses of the ESA and served to further polarize people who hold different values for wolves.

Seeing and participating in the recovery of wolves in the Great Lakes states have been the highlight of my career as a wildlife biologist. Actually, I thought it would never happen. I believed that there were too many anti-wolf people, that wolf conflicts with people would be insurmountable, and that the wolf itself would never adapt to the presence of so many people on the landscape. I

was wrong, very wrong. People in the Great Lakes states strongly supported wolf recovery, measures have been put in place to help reduce wolf-human conflict, and wolves have proven to be highly adaptable and more capable of using various habitats and tolerating people than we imagined.

Wolves are recovered in the Western Great Lakes states. A combined population exceeding 4,000 animals now lives in Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Contrary to some opinions that wolves have "just recovered," the

Open Season or Open Debate?

by Adrian Treves

By last winter's count, Wisconsin hosted 540 wolves, Michigan had a similar number, and Minnesota had several times as many, across a single connected population contiguous to the much larger Canadian one. As a result, the wolves of the Midwest reached the numerical target for removal from the federal list of threatened and endangered species several years ago. Nevertheless, since 2005, the U.S. government has twice lost challenges in federal court to its effort to transfer wolf management authority to the states. Underlying the technical details of the court cases are clashes of values between interest groups. The persistent current clash is between pro-hunting and anti-hunting groups, neither of which listens well to the other nor wishes to



In the effort to transfer wolf management authority to the states, a persistent conflict is between pro-hunting and anti-hunting groups.

compromise. I write this in hopes that the majority in the center will speak more loudly and states can regain wolf management authority.

Calls for hunting wolves have become louder and more prominent since 2007. In my town of Madison, Wisconsin, many respond to the idea of a wolf hunt as follows: "Already? Didn't they just recover?" Consider an analogy: When a star football player comes off of injured reserve, do you put him in a game immediately, or watch him in practice and training for a few weeks? In other areas and

in regional meetings of those with strong interests in wolf management, I heard other views also. Thoughtful and serious individuals who do not pull triggers easily will say things akin to "A hunting season is our best way to control wildlife. Making wolves into game would convert wolf-haters into wolf conservationists because game is valued. If hunters take wolves, there will be fewer attacks on livestock and bear-hunting dogs." Both sides appear equally reasonable. The key word is *appear*. We need more evidence before deciding.

truth is that numerically wolves met recovery and delisting criteria here years ago. Political and administrative paralysis delayed the delisting process, and sadly that continues today.

The wolf is one of the world's most studied mammals. Most aspects of the animal's biology have been probed by good scientists, and the quality of the research is without equal. We're especially fortunate to have had Dr. L. David Mech and Dr. Rolf Peterson study Midwestern wolves. As a result of their research and wolf research all over the world, we know a lot about the biology and human dimensions concerning wolves.

Likewise, people's attitudes about wolves and wolf management have been queried in all the Midwestern states. We have been conducting surveys, polling opinion leaders,

convening round-tables, assembling focus groups, and taking input from the public for decades. Is there more that can be learned? Yes, and there always will be. But the argument that we need to ponder the issue longer and wait for new evidence just does not hold up in the face of the information that already exists. We have the factual foundation on which a wolf management program can be built.

Some people believe that the ESA provides an inviolate cloak of protection for wolves. This is not the case. In Michigan, 147 dead wolves have been handled by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources from 2005 to the time of this writing in 2008. These animals died as a result of indiscriminate shooting, disease, vehicle collisions, and U.S. Department of Agriculture control actions at farms. All these carcasses

were received during the time when wolves were listed as endangered.

One of my great concerns is about public opinion if wolf populations are not controlled. I recall when white-tailed deer, giant Canada geese, and even wild turkeys were held in a precious public trust. Today, those species are so numerous that they have decreased worth in the eye of the general public. Why? Because their populations have been allowed to increase in many areas beyond what is healthy for the ecosystem, and the costs in many areas outweigh their benefits to society. Consider the example that in Michigan, motorists endure over 60,000 car-deer collisions yearly. Millions of dollars of farm crops are destroyed yearly, and native flora is being altered by deer feeding so significantly that recovery is not likely to occur for generations, if ever.

The common ground in Wisconsin includes support for a wolf hunting/trapping season if biologists deem it sustainable and if wolf damage to property becomes unmanageable. This center position is far different from the polarized extremes sometimes heard in the press (especially on TV) and from representatives of certain interest groups.



Adrian Treves

Adrian Treves, a professor of environmental studies, measures public opinion about wolves as part of his research.

Because problem wolves have always been a minority of the Wisconsin population and hunters may wound or kill the wrong animals, a selective harvest of problem wolves might be tricky to design. Furthermore, a hunter-scientist recently reviewed evidence for whether hunters act as good stewards of their game. He concluded that "hunters often hold attitudes and engage in behaviors that are not supportive of broad-based, ecological objectives . . . [and] the behaviors of hunter groups and individuals are often counter to desired needs of ecosystem stewardship" (abstract and p. 813 in Holsman, 2000, *Wildlife Society Bulletin*). In my mind the jury is still out about hunting as a solution to the problems of long-term wolf conservation and reducing wolf damage to property.

What about money you ask? Sure, hunters' fees could help pay for long-term conservation of a stable

What may be the costs of allowing too many wolves to exist on Midwestern landscapes? We are already seeing a decline in people's support for wolves in Michigan and Wisconsin. The usual reason given for this lack of support is that no management or control measures are in place. Wolves that live in designated wilderness areas should not be affected by human-contrived controls. A high percentage of the wolves in the Midwest, however, live in "working forests," places that are managed for a variety of values, not wilderness. Midwestern wolves live among or within an easy drive of 18 million people. Managing wolves in these conditions should be a responsibility of state conservation agencies. Individual "problem" wolves in Midwestern states will likely need to be controlled selectively, possibly by



Jim Hammill, now retired, served as a wildlife biologist for 30 years for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

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What may be the costs of allowing too many wolves to exist on Midwestern landscapes? We are already seeing a decline in people's support for wolves in Michigan and Wisconsin. The usual reason given for this lack of support is that no management or control measures are in place.

wolf population, but we need to consider the trade-offs. For example, will traditional contributors to the Wisconsin Endangered Resources Fund stop donating if wolves become game? These contributors have paid for more of state wolf management funding in Wisconsin than hunters. By our team's estimates, the fund might lose half a million dollars annually in donations, with dire consequences for other endangered species such as whooping cranes. Then comes another uncertainty. Who will pay for wolf permits? No one knows how many hunters will apply and how much each would be willing to pay. Will it be enough to offset the many costs of wolf management such as the current generous compensation payments? Compensation for damage by game species doesn't cover loss of pets, calves, and farmed deer and vet bills, which are currently covered by Wisconsin's

wolf compensation program. Other unanswered questions loom. Will Chippewa tribes step in and claim their rights to half the wolf permits? If they do, how many Chippewa hunters will participate? We know very little about some critical issues.

I hope respectful listening will prevail during this new period of debate over wolf hunting. But the issue has long been charged with deeply held beliefs and values toward wolves. Yet not many people sit at the table when policy is defined. That's why I devote part of my research efforts to measuring public opinions in surveys. We found the majority we surveyed share common ground in the center. The common ground in Wisconsin includes support for a wolf hunting/trapping season (84–89 percent of 1,899 respondents from across the state measured in two surveys conducted in 2001 and 2004). But this support has impor-



International Wolf Center

state or federal employees, just as they are now. However, any hope of effective population control will require much larger efforts. I believe a wolf management program in the Midwest could and should provide for a regulated, recreational take of wolves.

It is true that individual hunters and even some hunter groups are not supportive of sound environmental policy. The same can be said about other individuals or groups, no matter what their feelings are about hunting. However, let there be no doubt, hunters, trappers, and fishers, primarily through licenses and fees, have done the heavy lifting for wildlife conservation in this country for over 100 years, and they continue to do that today. They contribute billions of dollars annually to a broad range of game and non-game wild-

life conservation efforts, and have financially supported recovery efforts for many endangered species, plants and animals.

We have heard from many segments of the public: non-hunters, hunters, landowners, conservationists, farmers, wildlife enthusiasts and others. Most people want our decisions to lead to a pragmatic and flexible program for managing wolves that is considerate of the wide range of values that people have for wolves. They also want to see the wolf population remain viable and retained as a legacy that can be passed on to future generations. However, right now people at the extremes of the opinion spectrum seem to be driving the decision making. For this to change we must get beyond the gridlock we are now in. Then we will

need leadership at the state level to formulate a wolf-management program that is effective and as free from political intervention as possible, based on the best human dimensions research and biological science available. No one said this was going to be easy, but it is necessary for the long-term well-being of wolves and people in the Midwest. ■

Jim Hammill is retired from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, where he served as a wildlife biologist for 30 years. He is a member of the federal wolf recovery team, past member of the Michigan wolf recovery team, member of Safari Club International's conservation committee, member of International Wolf Center's board and president of Iron Range Consulting and Services Inc., a land and wildlife management consulting business.

tant preconditions for many of our respondents: if biologists deem it sustainable (37–38 percent), and if wolf damage to property becomes unmanageable (19–30 percent). This center position is far different from the polarized extremes sometimes heard in the press (especially on TV) and from representatives of certain interest groups. Can centrist opinions prevail?

Centrism isn't always popular because the vocal extremes both look upon those in the middle with distrust. "Pick a side," I imagine them thinking. But in this issue we are better off not picking sides against other people. We have to stay flexible and open to changing conditions and new evidence. Starry idealism, I know. What I fear will happen instead is that policy makers will be

swayed by loud, influential minorities and values other than those of their constituencies, then plunge headfirst into some solution without budgeting the time, effort or resources to track the outcomes vigilantly. If we don't watch our step, we can't make mid-course corrections, like a toddler that stumbles headlong on eager, unsteady feet.

Most people agree we need the wolves to stay wild, eat wild, and run wild. Pro-hunting folks may think hunting is the only way to keep that from happening. Anti-hunting folks may think rubber bullets, shock collars, livestock-guarding dogs, electric fences and so on may be better. What do you favor? Well at the moment it doesn't matter what you or I favor because the federal government has authority—although they have little capacity so they contract the states to manage.

Although the states presided over a historic recovery, a few extreme pro-wolf groups do not want them to have control. National groups, not local ones, are challenging state authority over wolf management. The national debate and litigation have undermined the state-level, participatory decision processes we tax-payers invested in for years. Court cases are not the answer. In particular, the recent court-mandated relisting of the wolf reflects a widespread misconception about the Endangered Species Act. It was intended to protect them while they recovered, which they have. Wisconsin residents can continue to make good decisions about our wolves. We have so far. ■

Adrian Treves is an assistant professor of environmental studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



A Wolf Plan That Works

Even though the Yellowstone wolves have prospered, they have done it in genetic isolation. There are between 1,500 and 2,200 wolves in the Northern Rockies, but not many of them go successfully from one recovery zone to others.

Kelly Godfrey

by
BILL
SCHNEIDER

This article first appeared on
July 24, 2008, at NewWest.Net.

It seems as if most people in the New West would prefer to see the wolf controversy resolved, and agencies could quickly do this. Will it happen? Anybody who follows the endlessly volatile wolf issue—and it's hard not to follow it with all the news coverage—knows the greens won a big victory last week. Judge Donald Molloy of the U.S. District Court sided with Earthjustice and 12 conservation organizations and essentially relisted, albeit temporarily, the wolf as an endangered species.

So, what now? That's the question I've been asking people on both sides of the debate this week, and I might have the answer, a way to quickly get the wolf debate behind us. Does that sound good?

Actually, everybody generally agrees on the current options before us, but nobody will say which option they'll pursue. It's complicated, of course, and we must keep in mind that Molloy's ruling doesn't overturn the proposed rule to delist the wolf. It more or less says the wolf is endangered while the courts decide if it is, or not, whereas over the last four months, the wolf has been off the endangered species list and under state control while the legal battle over delisting rages in the background. If agencies prevail in the main case, Molloy's ruling would merely go down as an aggravating delay for agencies in implementing hunting seasons and state management.

This leaves agencies with three choices:

- Appeal Molloy's decision to relist the wolf in addition to continuing to fight the main legal battle over delisting.
- Ignore Molloy's ruling and concentrate on trying to win the primary delisting case, forgetting about wolf hunting seasons for this year and perhaps next year, too.
- Suck it up, meet with the greens, and have a little "out-of-court settlement" to resolve the wolf issue right now.

I asked both Ed Bangs, wolf recovery coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the federal agency in charge of endangered species programs, and Chris Smith, chief of staff for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, what their agencies plan to do. Both dodged that question but didn't rule out any of the three options.

I called Suzanne Asha Stone, northern Rockies representative for Defenders of Wildlife, and Doug Honnold, managing attorney for Earthjustice, self-acclaimed as "the nation's leading environmental law firm," which is handling the case for the 12 conservation groups, to ask them what the agencies would have to do for them to accept delisting and withdraw the lawsuit. Keeping in mind that Stone only speaks for her organization, not the other groups, and that Honnold can only speculate on what his clients might decide, both gave me the same answer.

The two major sticking points are lack of what's called "genetic connectivity" and Wyoming's totally unacceptable wolf control plan. Neither Stone nor Honnold would guarantee that fixing these two problems would make wolf delisting litigation-proof, but I strongly suspect resolving them would keep us out of court.

The first point, Wyoming's dual-status plan that declares the wolf a "predator" (Wyomingish for vermin) in 90 percent of the state so, as Honnold says, "it can be killed by anybody anywhere" needs to go away. Radical pro-wolfers are probably loving Wyoming right now because if the state doesn't give up on dual status, it may hold up delisting for decades allowing the wolf to reclaim its entire former range throughout the western United States. Already, we have indications of wolf packs forming in Washington and Oregon. Soon, Colorado greens will have their dream come true, wolves in Rocky Mountain National Park to control elk numbers. All thanks to Wyoming.

"It's going to take the other two states (Idaho and Montana) and other interested parties to push Wyoming to develop a safety net instead of a free-firing zone," Honnold speculates. Even though the FWS had earlier rejected Wyoming's plan, "when (former Idaho Governor Dirk) Kempthorne came into office (as Secretary of the Interior), the Wyoming plan that had been unacceptable became magically acceptable."

And, of course, gave Judge Molloy another good reason to enjoin delisting, giving Wyoming exactly what

it did not want—more wolves and more federal control. Altogether now, can we all say "self-defeating insanity"?

The Nation of Wyoming has to be a team player and along with the other states give in to the greens, regardless of how much it hurts. Those bruised egos eventually heal.

Addressing the second point, genetic exchange, also seems easy enough. By definition "genetic exchange" means wolves moving back and forth between the three recovery zones (Yellowstone, central Idaho and northwestern Montana) without being whacked. Even though the Yellowstone wolves have prospered, they have done it in genetic isolation.

Like it or not, it's a numbers game. As I write this commentary, we have somewhere between 1,500 and 2,200 wolves running around the northern Rockies, but not many of them making it from one recovery zone to the other without getting in trouble and being "controlled."

Collectively, the three state management plans call for killing down the population to about 1,100 wolves. Based on the science he has read, that number minimizes the chance of genetic exchange, says Honnold, and Judge Molloy agreed with him and his clients.

"At a population level of 2,000 wolves, we are likely to have genetic exchange if we can maintain it for two years or more," Honnold says. "If there were a commitment to maintain a population of 2,000 wolves, I think these genetic issues would be solved."

That's the winter population, he adds, not the spring population, which includes the new crop of pups, many of which don't make it to their first birthday.

The recovery plan and delisting documents call for a minimum of 30 packs or 300 wolves. But the greens believe—and again Judge Molloy agrees—this is not enough to facilitate genetic exchange.

So now, I'm scratching my head. How hard can this be?



Kelly Godfrey

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We have roughly 2,000 wolves, a tolerable but probably not ideal level for agencies or the livestock industry. I say go with it and move on. It sure trumps any alternative we currently face, such as years of expensive litigation while wolves continue breeding and the real possibility of the greens prevailing in court and keeping the wolf an endangered species for a long time.

And, please, let's not do the is-there-a-number-between-1,100-and-2,000-that-might-work approach. The greens have an ace in the hole, and Molloy flopped another ace for them, so right now, they have the winning hand. Let's pick up on that and fold.

Stone tells me the decision must be based on science, but that's exactly what Bangs says. They simply have

different views of the available science, which will probably always be the case. And assuming judges keep agreeing with the green view of the science, wolves will be on the endangered species list.

The agencies have already said that having 1,100 wolves is enough, scientifically, to declare the wolf successfully recovered, so 2,000 wolves would only be more recovered, right? It might be more wolves than agencies think we need, but less than we'll have if we don't get out of the courthouse soon.

"We need to bring the stakeholders to the table and develop an acceptable plan," Stone proposes. "Montana did a great job in their plan in bringing all the stakeholders together, but this needs to be a region-wide effort. There are people on



Kelly Godfrey

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both sides who are willing to work together for a good outcome.”

Bangs, on the other hand, has little optimism of any such agreement ever happening, not now at least, because his experience tells him people can’t be rational about wolves. “Wolves will eventually wear everybody out, but right now, emotions are too high. It will work out eventually.”

But do we want “eventually”? How many wolves will we have by then? How many millions will be spent on wolf control that hunters would pay to do?

“Wolf management has nothing to do with reality,” Bangs reminds me. “A rational person could sit down and figure this out in a minute. If this were any another animal, this would already be a done deal, but people aren’t rational about wolves.”

“It’s a mess,” he admits. “And it’s getting expensive. More wolves do more damage. If you want more wolves in more places, you keep the wolves on the endangered species list.”

Is anybody in Wyoming listening?

Bangs also accused me of being “too rational” (which hasn’t happened too often) in suggesting agencies and greens could settle their differences. Nonetheless, I persist in believing we could resolve the wolf issue by the end of next week. All it would take is the agencies collectively deciding to maintain a population of 2,000 wolves (the status quo) instead of 1,100 and pressuring Wyoming to commit to plan something similar to plans written by Idaho or Montana.

This is doable, folks. In fact, it looks easy. ■

Bill Schneider is the travel and outdoor editor for NewWest.Net.



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Tracking the Pack

Watching Wolves: Behavioral Observations Provide Clues about Wolf Interactions

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator,
International Wolf Center

In summer 2008, the International Wolf Center in Ely, Minnesota, celebrated a historic event. For the first time, the Center's world-renowned Exhibit Pack included wolves of three distinct age groups, each group representing a different North American subspecies of *Canis lupus*, the gray wolf. The Exhibit

Pack is now composed of two arctic wolves (*Canis lupus arctos*) born in 2000, two Great Plains wolves (*Canis lupus nubilus*) born in 2004, and the new members, two Rocky Mountain, or Northwestern, pups (*Canis lupus occidentalis*) born in spring 2008.

A wild wolf pack is a family consisting of parents, pups of the current year and

often offspring of previous years. Thus, in a captive pack, the introduction of pups that are not related to the other wolves must be done carefully and with a plan to predict, monitor and intervene if negative behavior occurs and if there is potential for injury to any of the wolves.

To implement this plan, the Center formed a Behavioral Observation Team. Participants were trained to use a comprehensive behavioral dictionary called an *ethogram*, and each team member was equipped with a new Hewlett-Packard laptop computer for recording every detail of wolf interaction during the first critical days of the pups' introduction to the Exhibit Pack.

Behavioral observations during previous pup introductions at the Center were handwritten on paper. This recording method made it difficult and cumbersome to analyze and interpret the data. This year, a generous grant from Hewlett-Packard enabled the Center to acquire the laptops. The data collection for this "high-tech" approach to pup introduction was more detailed and thorough, and the data analysis more efficient and accurate. This in turn yielded valuable insights into the complex social dynamics of a captive wolf pack.

When staff is observing the Center's pack, they record a wide variety of behaviors:



International Wolf Center

Grizzer resting on a Greeting Rock. Determining the wolves' choices of sleeping and resting companions provides an idea about their relationships and individual tolerance of one another.

Shadow asserts dominance over Grizzer, while Maya shows a submissive head posture.



International Wolf Center



International Wolf Center

Shadow (front), Grizzer (left) and Maya howl. A captive pack member's degree of social cohesiveness can be determined by its willingness to start or join in a howl.

Resting. Determining the wolves' choices of sleeping and resting companions provides an idea about their relationships and individual tolerance of one another.

Eating. The degree of confidence when eating or defending food as well as the ability to acquire food from other wolves can be an indication of status. Data collected from observing eating behavior are also important for monitoring each wolf's nutrition.

Walking, wandering, and approaching. Even in a captive environment, wolves spend a fair amount of time investigating and checking scents. These data can reveal a solitary individual as opposed to a wolf that seeks social interactions.

Greeting and muzzle biting. When wolves interact, facial contact includes licking and muzzle biting. Whether the muzzle bites are hard or soft can often reveal

whether there is tension in the pack.

Following and chasing. When dominance interaction occurs in the pack, a more dominant wolf will often attempt to intimidate a lower-ranking wolf by following it. This can result in chasing and "mobbing" by the other wolves. Recording the subtle behavior that leads to this can alert staff to trouble brewing.

Tail and ear postures. Wolves use a variety of body postures to express status and confidence. A high tail is indicative of a confident or aroused animal. Ears perked forward demonstrate interest or intent. This intent can be to display dominance, or it can be a signal of predatory behavior. In contrast, pulled-back ears and a tucked tail are signs of an animal that is fearful or submissive. This is often an indication of potential trouble, as pack members

may interpret fear as weakness and then challenge a submissive wolf.

Howling. In the wild, wolves howl for a number of reasons including rallying the pack and defending territory. In captivity, a pack member's degree of social cohesiveness can be determined by its willingness to start or join in a howl or, conversely, by its sudden retreat when the rest of the pack interacts. The location of a wolf during a howl can also be an indicator of its status or position. At the Center, higher-ranking wolves often climb to the top of a hill or a rock to howl.

The introduction of the 2008 pups was deemed a resounding success. The Behavioral Observation Team worked 24 hours a

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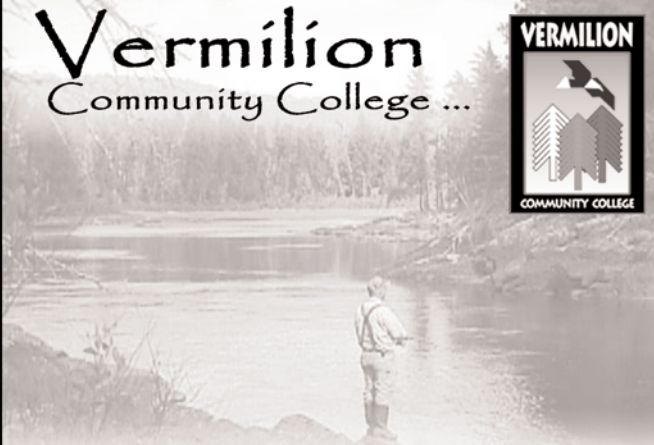


day recording the interactions of the Exhibit Pack. The Wolf Care Staff analyzed and interpreted over 5,000 data entries August 4 through August 8. Pack dynamics will continue to evolve as the pups mature and find their places in the group. We should see some interesting behaviors this winter, and the result will be new insights into our wolves' social interactions. ■

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Farewell to Lakota: Another Chapter Ends

by Walter Medwid

“The end of an era” says it well, but at the same time it just doesn’t quite capture the significance of Lakota’s passing on November 7, 2008. From spring 1993, Lakota and her siblings Kiana, MacKenzie and Lucas did the thing they did best . . . they acted like wolves. They had a unique stage on which to engage and educate a global audience that measured in the hundreds of thousands. That audience watched Lakota as a pup, saw her grow to become a magnificent adult, and witnessed the dominance battles in the main enclosure with her siblings, and especially with the new gang in town, Malik and Shadow, the two arctic wolves that joined the main pack in 2000. Finally, we all watched her in her new quarters as she joined the Retired Pack when life in the main enclosure with the arctics became too precarious.

The year 1993 has some resonance with me, as it was the year I joined the staff of the Center as executive director. It was also the year the Center’s magnificent building



Lakota, the last member of the International Wolf Center’s Retired Pack, died on November 7, 2008.

opened to the world. I closed one chapter in my life when I left Minnesota last year to return to Vermont. With the last of the 1993 pups now gone, another chapter ends. To say it mildly, those chapters do not end easily.

What remains for me are the memories of having had the great privilege of being a small part of a remarkable group of animals. Each one had a distinctive personality, with Lakota standing out among her siblings as the one with the greatest exuberance—or perhaps it was just a dose of hyperactivity.

Lakota and her packmates worked in bridging the gap between humans and wolves in the wild. They stirred our imaginations, increased our knowledge of natural systems and kindled our passion for things wild.

We say good-bye, but also job well done! ■

Walter Medwid is past executive director of the International Wolf Center and is now the executive director of the NorthWoods Stewardship Center in East Charleston, Vermont.

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Wild Wolves
in Yellowstone National Park

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Wolves of the World

WOLVES IN MONGOLIA AND INNER MONGOLIA

Protectors of the Grasslands

by Cornelia Hutt

Out here, the grass and the grassland are the life, the big life. All else is little life that depends on the big life for survival. Even wolves and humans are little life. . . . When you kill off the big life of the grassland, all the little lives are doomed. The damage done by gazelles far outstrips any done by the wolves. . . . Why do you think Tengger (Mongol heaven) bestows favor on the wolves? The wolves kill only animals that harm the grassland. How could Tengger not bestow favor on the wolves?

—Jiang Rong, *Wolf Totem*

Interest in Mongolia, Inner Mongolia* and the culture of the Mongols, an ancient people who have survived for millennia on the vast, isolated steppes of the region's grasslands, has been heightened by the recent publication (2008) in English of the novel *Wolf Totem*. Released in China in 2004 (sales of *Wolf Totem* are surpassed only by Mao's *Little Red Book*), the novel recounts the experience of Chen Zhen, a young Beijing intellectual in the 1960s. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), Chen is sent, along with millions of other young urbanites, to the grasslands of Inner Mongolia to work as a shepherd. Most of his contemporaries yearn to return home, but Chen learns to appreciate and love the hostile land, the nomads who befriend him, and the free spirit

of the wolves, which have hunted there for thousands of years.

From an old Mongol, Chen learns about the delicate ecological balance between the animals of the grassland and the nomadic shepherds who wander the trackless open spaces with their livestock. Chen also discovers the value of individual freedom as well as the value of grouping together for survival. Wolves do attack and kill the nomads' animals, especially in winter, when even guard dogs, semicircles of wagons and mobile fencing festooned with felt rugs can't deter hungry wolves. Nevertheless, the Mongols venerate their wild foes and emulate them. "Two sheepskins put together won't keep you as warm as a single wolf pelt," the old Mongol tells Chen. "But we don't use them as bedding.

We respect the wolves too much."

Not so some of the Chinese, who have for centuries despised and demonized the wolf. With the arrival of the "tillers of the land" after the Cultural Revolution, a campaign begins to exterminate the wolves. Returning to the region 30 years after his sojourn there, Chen finds the old Mongol's grim prophecy fulfilled. The landscape has been savagely cleansed of wolves, and the environmental destruction accompanying China's rapid modernization has destroyed the harmony between humans and the land. As overgrazing and plowing deplete the grass, dust storms from the encroaching desert



* Many Americans think Inner Mongolia is part of Mongolia. However, Inner Mongolia is part of China, an area running along approximately two-thirds of China's northern border. Mongolia, on the other hand, is an independent country.

periodically envelop Beijing in fine, suffocating yellow dust.

The book, part modern fable, part epic and part social commentary, is harshly critical of the devastation the Chinese have wrought in Inner Mongolia—and critical of the Chinese character as well. It is a wonder the book is so popular in China—and an even greater wonder that it has escaped censorship.

The “way of the wolf” in *Wolf Totem* is often a stretch in terms of accuracy. The wolves are allegorical and in some episodes do not resemble the real animal in all its magnificence. But Chen gets a lot of things right. Musing about his life with the nomadic herders, he thinks back to his childhood: “Not until coming to the grassland did he realize that in nature there is no wild animal that has evolved more highly or more perfectly than the gray wolf. Books, and especially fairy tales, he saw, often misled people.”

Steeped in romance and mystery, the region conjures up images of the fierce Mongol warrior Genghis Khan, 13th-century “emperor of emperors,” whose army swept out of the Asian steppes to conquer two-thirds of the known world. The origin myth of the deified Genghis Khan, recounted in the 1100s in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, teaches that the ancestors of the Mongols were a Blue Wolf and a White Fallow Doe, the male and female principles of sky and earth, light and dark. Legend also tells that the Mongols learned their combat strategies from the grasslands wolves.

Eager to experience some semblance of the life of the Mongols, tourists now flock to both Mongolia and Inner Mongolia for horseback treks and to live in portable gers, drink *airag* (fermented mare’s milk) and dine on *borts* (dried meat), *khushuur* (fried meat pie), mutton, *boodog* (roast goat) and cheese curds. Nomadic life still predominates in the empty spaces of the remote

China is slowly responding to the reality that one of Earth’s largest grasslands ecosystems is turning rapidly to dust and desolation.

areas of Mongolia, but settled agricultural communities are becoming more common. Cell phones and computers haven’t replaced throat singing and equestrian games for entertainment, but technology is making inroads.

China is slowly responding to the reality that one of Earth’s largest grasslands ecosystems is turning rapidly to dust and desolation. Over the past six years, nearly 2 million hectares of grassland have been restored in Alxa League, an area in the westernmost end of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. China reports an increase in the numbers of some animals such as the Mongolian gazelle and the khulan (Mongolian wild ass). Herds of camels and sheep are thriving where there is ample grass—and so are the wolves.

The restored region is popular with itinerant wolves from across the border in Mongolia, too. Wolves are protected in Alxa League, but not in Mongolia, a vast country larger than Alaska, where an estimated (and

possibly stable) population of 10,000 to 20,000 wolves lives. No livestock damage compensation is paid either in Mongolia or in Inner Mongolia. But since herders in Alxa League cannot shoot, snare or poison wolves, a 100-kilometer fence has been built along the border in the hope that the barrier will discourage wolves from entering.

Despite such reclamation efforts, Mongolia and China in particular continue to modernize at a break-neck pace, and pessimistic though the closing words of *Wolf Totem*’s epilogue are, they have the ring of an “inconvenient truth.” Chen is in Beijing, looking out the window at a “yellow dragon” sandstorm that has obliterated the sun and the sky. “The wolves had receded into legend, and the grassland was a distant memory. A nomadic herding society was now extinct; even the last trace left by the wolves on the Inner Mongolian grassland . . . would be buried in yellow sand.” ■

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



People for Wolves

Teen Aspires to Live the Center's Mission

by Tracy O'Connell

Last fall, Hillari Vashaw of Holland, Michigan, living the mission of the International Wolf Center, was moved to teach students in the fourth grade at her local elementary school about wolves. Just 13 years old, the seventh-grader put together a presentation using knowledge gleaned from activities in which she took part during a two-day visit with her grandparents, both teachers, to the Center in Ely, Minnesota.

She had her students wear name tags of the ambassador wolves and established her role with a sign that said "Alpha Wolf"—or perhaps she claimed that title because Shadow, the dominant wolf in the ambassador pack, is her favorite. The class watched the ambassador wolves on the webcam, played "pin the tail on the wolf," showing their knowledge of body postures that wolves exhibit in various circumstances, practiced howling, and studied samples of scats and paw prints that Vashaw brought to class.

Noting that her favorite subjects are science and social studies, Vashaw hopes to be a wolf biologist. "I'm a nature girl," she says, adding that she loves camping with her grandparents in the Sylvania Wilderness in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. That's where her interest in wolves began, when she was in the third grade, and where in 2007 she met Nancy Warren, a volunteer with the Timber Wolf Alliance, who made a wolf presentation. In 2008 she heard Warren speak again and went howling with her.

Vashaw describes the activities she packed into two days at the Center in Ely, noting, "My experience in wolf

communication was amazing! In addition to hearing two faint replies I also got to see the northern lights! The habitat hike was really fun. I learned where a wolf pack could be or where a female could dig her den. But I enjoyed most watching the ambassador wolves; I was fortunate enough to see them howl!"

She was touched to see a favorite expression, "We conserve only what

we love; we love only what we understand; and we understand only what we learn," at the Center. "Over the years I realized how wonderful these creatures are and how they have such a huge role in the environment," she says. "They are by far my favorite animal, and I would love to help them any way I can." ■

Tracy O'Connell teaches in the Marketing Communications program at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and is an International Wolf Center member who serves on communications-related Center committees.



Kathy Nemeth

As part of her presentation about wolves, Hillari Vashaw showed fourth-graders how to watch the Center's ambassador wolves on the webcam.

Seventh-grader Hillari Vashaw gave a presentation about wolves to a fourth-grade class, using knowledge gleaned from a visit to the International Wolf Center in Ely, Minnesota.



Kathy Nemeth

For more information about the Timber Wolf Alliance, go to <http://www.discoverycenter.net/twa.htm>, or contact the organization's coordinator, Anna Cellar, at anna@discoverycenter.net.

A Look Beyond

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Going Green Helps Wolves Too

by Tracy O'Connell

Climate change, sustainability, environmental protection, ecological footprint. These terms, once used only by those intently focused on environmental issues, are all around us today. While some continue to claim our planet's climate patterns reflect a recurring, natural cycle, increasingly people around the globe are becoming worried about the impact of human actions—their actions—and are seeking to stem the pattern of increasingly severe storms, warmer weather, and other indicators that most scientists associate with human-caused environmental degradation.

The International Wolf Center is no exception. Our members embrace the outdoors and seek to learn more about it. And that learning points to the impact of climate change on the wolf and its prey. Studies of wolves and moose on Isle Royale in Lake Superior conducted by Center board member Rolf Peterson have shown how that small, closed ecosystem has been affected by warming trends. Moose in warmer summers don't eat enough to put on the weight needed to survive the winter and are increasingly affected by the winter tick, a parasite that thrives in warmer climates. A decline in moose population will obviously affect wolves on the island.

As we seek to slow or reverse the damage many say has already been done to our planet, one idea most people can easily support is the protection of our forests. Trees not only

create oxygen, help keep the soil from eroding, and shade the earth from the sun, they also retain (or "sequester") carbon, which would otherwise contribute to greenhouse gases associated with climate change.

One organization that monitors environmentally responsible forestry practices is the Forest Stewardship Council, a not-for-profit organization with offices in 46 countries. Products carrying the FSC label are independently certified to assure consumers that they come from forests that are managed to meet the social, economic and ecological needs of present and future generations.

Concerned with protecting the complex web of life in which the wolf plays a part, the Center prints this magazine with soy ink (which protects air quality by not releasing volatile organic compounds associated with traditional printing processes)



Courtesy of Saxton Printing

on FSC-certified paper. How can you help? Let us communicate with you via email, rather than on paper. Simply email your mailing address to Office3@wolf.org. Together, we'll make a difference. ■

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