

INTERNATIONAL WOLF

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOLF CENTER
SUMMER 2009



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LETTER EXPLAINS WOLF DELISTING, page 8

INTERNATIONAL WOLF

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOLF CENTER
VOLUME 19, NO. 2 SUMMER 2009

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Wolves have been delisted again. Here a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist who helped coordinate wolf recovery describes in a letter to the Obama administration why delisting is appropriate.

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A pack of rare Ethiopian wolves in serious danger from rabies

Photo by Martin Harvey

Martin Harvey is an acclaimed South Africa-based photographer whose extensive photographic library includes wildlife, landscapes and people from more than 20 African countries.

His Web site is:
www.wildimagesonline.com

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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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International Wolf Center

Deep Snow Fun for Wolves but Not for Roof

Now loading on the roof at the International Wolf Center in Ely is suspected to have damaged the roof over the *Wolves and Humans* exhibit and possibly other areas. "Fortunately, the area was already closed for a state-funded \$350,000 lobby reconstruction and the exhibit was placed in temporary storage," noted Mary Ortiz, Executive Director. "Our entrance and Wolf Den Store are open for visitors at the southeast end of the building at the employee entrance."

Completion of the reconstruction is likely in June or early July. ■

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The Need to Secure Wolf Habitat

by Jim Hammill, International Wolf Center Board Member

The fresh tracks of five wolves were there in the November snow as I made my way into our northern Michigan cabin. I know the home range of this family group well, and I imagined where the wolves were at that moment, likely transecting a large block of state-owned land. Nightfall might find them on a yet larger block of corporate timber land, and for the next several days they would ply state, corporate, and private land protected by conservation easements.

This pack was fortunate. Not only did its home range have adequate prey, all 80 square miles of it were relatively secure from subdivision and development. It would be wolf country into the foreseeable future. However, most wolves in the Great Lakes States now exist in areas where rural sprawl is projected to impact "wild lands" during the next two decades.

In spite of the recent downturn in housing starts, predictions remain that when our economic fortunes improve, housing starts and degradation of wild lands by rural sprawl will be in lock step with our increasing population. Large home-range species that are habitat generalists stand to lose most in the tsunami of rural development that **will come**.

Wolves, of course, head that list. Before you become complacent, believing that state, county, or federal lands will provide plenty of room for wolves to live securely, consider this: private lands are home to 95% of the species on the federal endangered species list. More than half of all U.S. forest land is owned privately and 92% of that is held by family forest owners. Twenty percent of those owners are now over 75-years old.

Often the intergenerational transfer of land results in a new generation of owners, people who are ill-prepared for land stewardship and who have no sense of forest ecological values. The result is subdivision of land for economic gain.

During one recent decade in the northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan, 20% of private land classified as forested by the U.S. Forest Service converted to a rural housing category. Many areas of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan are projected to change similarly in the next 20 years. Wolves have demonstrated a remarkable tolerance for people and all that people bring. People, however, have not been so willing to share the land with wolves. As wild lands are subdivided, roaded, cleared, and otherwise groomed for our use, a head-on collision with our growing wolf population seems inevitable. The "social carrying capacity" for wolves is likely to be reached before the biological carrying capacity. This is why retaining as much wild land as possible is important to wolf biology.

There is a multitude of programs now available to ease the economic burden of owning land. Resource professionals are available to help private landowners recognize the values of their property and extract some economic gain while preserving ecological integrity. Finally, there are people available to help landowners learn to live with wolves. Working to secure wolf habitat for generations of wolves and people yet unborn is a worthwhile effort and a legacy that we will be measured against. ■

Jim Hammill is a retired Michigan DNR wildlife biologist, the principle consultant at Iron Range Consulting and Services Inc. for wildlife and land-management, and a current member of the board of directors.



Return of the Wolf

Welcome Back,
Old Friend

BY JASMINE MINBASHIAN

*Wolf photos Courtesy of
Conservation Northwest*

For far too long, the howl of the wolf has been absent from Washington's rugged mountain ranges. A massive extermination campaign started by early settlers and fur-traders had accomplished its goals by the 1940s. Today there are more reports of Sasquatch in Washington than of wolves.

That explains the excitement I heard on a phone call from George Wooten, a Conservation Northwest associate.

"Are you ready? Are you sitting down?" George's enthusiasm exploded as soon as I picked up the phone. "Our wildlife cameras have captured photos of what might be some sort of large canid. And that's not all: *there are six pups!*"

The possible wolf with pups was captured on a camera of the sort used by sportsmen to document wild-

**Our concepts of habitat
must evolve to include
the entire fabric
of a landscape and the
ways animals use land
features as they move.**

life movements. The cameras are placed in remote locations along game trails. Their shutters are activated when an animal passes.

Shortly after that photo was taken, Scott Fitkin, a biologist with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, tracked down two of the adult canids and fitted them with radio collars. Fitkin sent samples of their DNA to a specialized canid genetics lab in California.



Wolves lived in Washington for a very long time. They first migrated into Washington from the southern Great Plains about 10,000 years ago when the last ice sheets retreated. Their long history in these mountains means that they have been an important part of the region's natural and cultural heritage. Early settlers and explorers reported that wolves were "exceedingly numerous" and were found in nearly every major river drainage in Washington.

Extensive trapping of wolves for their pelts began with the arrival of the Hudson Bay Company in the American Northwest in 1821. The fur trading company and its hired guns, known as "wolfers," used strychnine to poison wolves at its early Washington farming operations and set high prices on wolf skins to encourage Indians to kill them. By 1939, the U.S. Forest Service estimated that only about *ten wolves* in total survived on all national forest lands in the state.

In recent decades, there have been verified sightings of individual wolves in the mountains of Washington. There have even been a few documented cases of adults and pups howling, mostly in and around North Cascades National Park. But those reports could not be verified as being from wild wolves, and not illegally introduced wolf-dog hybrids.

Until now.

In July of last year, the lab confirmed that the canids trapped by Scott Fitkin were, indeed, wild wolves. They had migrated from British Columbia or central Alberta and started a new pack of their own in Washington's North Cascades, now dubbed "the Lookout Pack."

Wolves are built for travel. With long, elegant legs, they trot on their toes, giving them a fluid gait that

allows them to cover an average of 30 miles a day. If motivated, wolves are capable of moving hundreds of miles in several days.

Wolves' home ranges or territories vary, but usually average about 140 to 400 square miles. Territory size is often smaller when prey is common and other packs live nearby. Wolves are social animals and mostly stick with their families, but once in awhile—just like people—they break away from the pack to explore new territory and start their own pack.

As habitat generalists, wolves don't need much to survive. Fitkin says, "For wolves to do well, they only need two things: an adequate

ungulate prey base and for us not to kill them."

But humans have generally not granted them that much.

Remember the video game Frogger? Your joystick moves a little frog character across a series of busy highways and your challenge is to not get squashed. Now, add in hunters that can shoot you on sight—oh, and no rest stops. The game suddenly gets a lot harder.

That's what wolves and other wide-ranging animals face today. Development and human population growth continue to expand at an aggressive clip. As people expand into undeveloped areas, the options



Conservation Northwest



for safe travel for these animals becomes narrowed down dangerously. The more roads, highways, farms and urbanized landscapes wolves must cross, the greater the chance that they will be killed by a fast moving metal object: a car or a bullet.

Bill Gaines, a U.S. Forest Service biologist, has teamed with other scientists to conduct large landscape analyses on the least risky routes wide-ranging animals could use to move into and around Washington. He is studying the concept of “wildlife connectivity.” He says it’s just a fancy term for understanding how animals move across a landscape.

Gaines believes the Lookout wolves could have arrived in Washington’s North Cascades by one of two routes. The most likely is the north-south connection from the southern British Columbia’s Cascades. Or they might have used an east-west route through

the Kootenays of southeastern B.C., into northeast Washington’s Kettle and Selkirk Ranges, and over the Okanogan Valley.

“Either way,” Gaines adds, “they had to run a gauntlet through British Columbia. There’s quite a bit of persecution of wolves across the border.”

Alberta and British Columbia have none of the United State’s legislative safeguards in place, such as the Endangered Species Act, to protect

threatened species and their habitat. Both provinces have virtually no limitations or monitoring of the trophy hunting of wolves. Wolves have been scapegoats for the decline of everything from marmots to mountain caribou, and official government policy closely resembles anti-wolf policies of the American Old West.

British Columbia recently made controversial changes to wolf hunting regulations. The province removed the three-animal bag limit on wolves in mountain caribou recovery zones.

Alberta has gone back to the days of strychnine poisoning, using that method to kill wolves for the last three years. This is part of an effort to increase caribou numbers. The proposal was met with stiff opposition, and just this spring the province suspended its poisoning program while continuing with aerial shooting.

**“Our wildlife cameras
have captured photos
of what might be some
sort of large canid.
And that’s not all:
there are six pups!”**



Living proof that wolves have immigrated to Washington and reproduced.



Meanwhile, the public's attitude toward wolves is changing in the U.S. Three of four Washington residents support wolf recovery, according to a 2008 poll. A second poll shows that most hunters in the state support managing a self-sustaining population of wolves, citing among other reasons that all wildlife deserve to flourish.

Increasingly, research is showing how the long absence of top predators like the wolf has disrupted an ancient and important relationship between predator and prey. A recent Oregon State University study suggests that the temperate rainforest of Olympic National Park is suffering from the elimination of wolves and subsequent domination by herds of browsing elk. Many stream banks have been largely denuded of young trees needed for recruiting of future, old trees. As a result, the park is a very different place than it was 70 years ago. Riparian areas in the North Cascades with its abundant deer populations could also benefit from the return of wolves.

So what will it take to make Washington a state that can continue to support free-roaming critters? Will we continue to have a wild landscape where we coexist with nature? Or will the only place to see wolves and grizzly bears be at the Woodland Park Zoo? With an estimated 70,000 acres of private undeveloped land being converted annually to urban and industrial uses, there is reason for concern.

Concerned citizens and groups like Conservation Northwest have been looking for solutions. There is a large and growing diversity of people who don't want to lose the "wild" in "the Wild West."

That list includes all the governors of the western states. In 2007, the

Western Governors' Association, responded to pressure from hunters and anglers to protect wildlife from large energy developments. The result was a resolution to protect wildlife corridors and crucial habitats. This year they followed up with a 140-page report examining issues affecting wildlife movement—from land use to transportation to climate change. The group recently urged Congress and the Bush administration to allow more review before companies are allowed to drill in wildlife corridors or sensitive habitat on public lands.

In Washington State, the Western Governors' Association wildlife initiative has spawned efforts to understand important wildlife connectivity areas at the state level. A group of some of leading biologists and agency innovators has issued a series of reports on terrestrial wildlife habitat and wildlife movement in Washington. This effort, informally known as the Washington Habitat Connectivity Working Group, will provide scientific guidance for planners of state conservation, land use, and transportation policies.

Landscape analyses by the connectivity group are critical for wolf recovery in Washington. Our concepts of habitat must evolve to include the entire fabric of a landscape and the ways animals use land features as they move. To that end, Conservation Northwest is working with local communities, including ranchers and local timber mills, to preserve the features of ranchlands and forest lands that are critical for wildlife such as wolves.

Our greatest challenge might be to help the public appreciate the important role that keystone species like the wolf have on our landscape. That understanding will continue to build tolerance toward them. Thanks



Conservation Northwest

Jasmine Minbashian surveys new occupied wolf range in Washington.

to progress already made, the long silence of the wolf in Washington has finally been broken. ■

Jasmine Minbashian is special projects director at Conservation Northwest, <http://www.conservationnw.org>, a non-profit organization based in Bellingham, Washington that works to protect and connect old-growth forests and other wild areas from the Washington Coast to the Canadian Rockies. She has worked in the field of wildlife and forest conservation for over ten years, and is leading Conservation Northwest's efforts to recover wolves in Washington State.

Investigation Underway in Death of Washington State Wolf

One, possibly two, of the 9 wolves in Washington state's new Lookout pack is dead. A state and federal investigation is underway into the suspected illegal killing.

Stay tuned at www.conservationnw.org for current news and updates.

Go to www.wolf.org for a link to an April 1, 2009 news article.

Subject: **Obama Administration Review of Pending Bush Administration Regulations**

January 21, 2009

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Now that the wolf has been delisted again in the Upper Midwest and the Northern Rockies (except Wyoming), International Wolf believes that our audience would appreciate reading the following authoritative rationale that supported the USFWS making its decision. The explanation is in the form of a letter that the Department of the Interior (DOI) received from a retired USFS Midwest Regional Endangered Species Listing Coordinator, Ronald Refsnider. Upon acquiring the letter from the DOI, International Wolf sought and obtained Mr. Refsnider's permission to reprint the letter, for which we thank him.

Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street
Washington, DC 20240

Subject: Obama Administration Review
of Pending Bush Administration Regulations

Dear Secretary Salazar:

First allow me to congratulate you on your appointment and confirmation as Secretary of the Interior. As a former Interior Department employee who worked under 5 administrations, I have some understanding of the breadth of the issues you will be facing and the complexity of the decisions you will be making. I wish you the best in your new endeavor of service to all Americans and stewardship of many of our great nation's natural resources.

During my last 23 years of federal service I was a biologist in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Endangered Species Program. For my final years I served in the position of Midwest Regional Endangered Species Listing Coordinator in Minneapolis, MN, where I drafted, and helped draft, proposed and final "endangered species listing rules." I took an early retirement in 2007 in large part due to my frustration with trying to properly and scientifically implement endangered species protections under the Bush appointees in Interior. Those appointees did their best to destroy the FWS's credibility and ability to carry out the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and they largely succeeded. I know you will hear many unpleasant details of the last eight years from your Inspector General, so I will not dwell on them here. Suffice it to say that there were many bad ESA decisions, policies, and regulations produced during the Bush 43 era, so I applaud the White House's decision to put a hold on all pending new Bush regulations until President Obama's appointees can review them. If only you could easily undo some that are already in place.

My hope in writing this letter is that I can persuade you to hasten the review and re-finalization of a specific 2007 final endangered species regulation for which I was the primary author prior to my retirement. This regulation removed the Western Great Lakes Distinct Population Segment of Gray Wolves from the list of threatened and endangered wildlife, and thus removed them from the protections of the ESA (72 FR 6052-6103; February 8, 2007). Subsequently, this delisting was litigated by

several animal welfare organizations, and was vacated on a technicality and remanded by D.C. District Court. Currently, the FWS was about to republish the revised final rule in the *Federal Register*, and thereby re-delist those Midwestern wolves. My successor (Laura Ragan; 612-713-5157; Laura_Ragan@fws.gov), with extensive assistance from career Interior attorneys, had supplemented and revised the 2007 final rule to address the court's concern. While the Western Great Lakes gray wolf delisting was opposed by animal welfare organizations (Humane Society of the United States, Animal Protection Institute (now Born Free USA), and Help Our Wolves Live (HOWL)), there were numerous local, regional, and national wildlife conservation and environmental organizations that supported the delisting. Among them were the National Wildlife Federation, Defenders of Wildlife, the Sierra Club, the Timber Wolf Alliance, and the scientific peer reviewers who reviewed the delisting proposal.

The animal welfare organizations have tried to portray this Midwest wolf delisting as a politically-based decision by a Bush administration that was opposed to the ESA. While that administration was indeed opposed to the ESA, this delisting was not initiated by the Bush folks, nor was it a political decision. In fact, the FWS and I began working on delisting Minnesota wolves in 1998 during the Clinton Administration, and under the direction of Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and FWS Director Jamie Clark, both conservationists with very strong and widely recognized environmental credentials. My regional office sent the first complete proposal (I was the author) to reduce the wolf's ESA protections to our Washington office in the waning months of the Clinton Administration. It was published in the *Federal Register* in the opening months of the Bush Administration. It was not a Bush/Norton/Kempthorne initiative.

(Note that this letter only discusses the Western Great Lakes gray wolf delisting. A separate, simultaneous, but very different delisting final rule has also been published, litigated, enjoined, and now re-finalized by the FWS Denver Regional Office for the Northern Rocky Mountains Distinct Population Segment of gray wolves. I was peripherally involved in that project, but I lack sufficiently detailed knowledge of its scientific basis to have a clear opinion on whether it is warranted, or rather was a political decision that should be reversed by you. This letter is only concerned with the Western Great Lakes wolf delisting, which I personally know was not politically-based and, indeed, was scientifically justified.)

My former office, and the FWS in Washington, DC, have been trying to figure out the appropriate way to delist Midwest wolves since Secretary Babbitt's tenure. Although three federal courts have ruled against reducing or removing ESA protections for Midwestern wolves, none of those judges took issue with FWS's declarations that Midwestern wolves have recovered, and none said that Midwestern wolves should not be delisted. In fact, one judge specifically agreed that Midwestern

"My hope in writing this letter is that I can persuade you to hasten the review and re-finalization of a specific 2007 final endangered species regulation..."

“The problem here is not a failed wolf recovery program or a lack of state commitment, but rather a failure to successfully delist a recovered population of wolves.”

WOLVES DELISTED AGAIN!

Continuing its on-again/off-again journey, wolf delisting was finalized on April 2, 2009 and becomes effective May 4, 2009.

...except for Wyoming...

...and unless new lawsuits, now being filed by several wildlife protection groups, overturn the Final Rule.

For more details, please see

http://www.wolf.org/wolves/news/live_news_detail.asp?id=3909

wolves are recovered. Rather, each court ruled against Midwestern wolf delisting on technical or procedural issues. The FWS is now trying to comply with the courts' somewhat contradictory advice on how to properly delist Midwestern wolves. I have read the current pending final rule, and I believe it achieves that goal.

Midwestern wolf recovery has been easier than Rocky Mountain wolf recovery, because the Departments of Natural Resources in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota have been cooperating with FWS and have even taken on leading roles in wolf restoration. As you know, this is in stark contrast to the situation in the Northern Rockies. Midwestern wolves have greatly exceeded federal recovery criteria, and these three states have developed, and in some cases even updated and revised, science-based wolf management plans that will ensure a viable wolf population for the foreseeable future. The problem here is not a failed wolf recovery program or a lack of state commitment, but rather a failure to successfully delist a recovered population of wolves. This failure to delist wolves in the Western Great Lakes, and thereby complete the final chapter of a clear ESA success story, has led to the growing belief that the ESA does not work.

There is some urgency to finalizing the delisting of Midwestern wolves. Calving season will soon begin here, and that will trigger an upswing in wolf depredations on livestock, long a highly contentious issue. When wolves were rare and warranted protection as an endangered or threatened species, Midwest farmers were willing (grudgingly, of course) to put up with some level of compensated loss of their stock. However, wolves are no longer rare in the Midwest. There is no efficient and effective way to control depredating wolves while they are listed as endangered. Each of these states has a wolf management plan in place that can deal with “problem wolves” without adversely affecting the overall wolf population (again in contrast to the Northern Rockies situation). These state plans were effectively implemented for 18 months prior to the 2008 vacature and remand of the delisting, and they will be implemented again immediately upon the effective date of the delisting. The effective date would have been around the end of February—prior to the onset of calving—in the absence of White House Chief of Staff Emanuel's hold on pending rules. Thus, a prompt review and release of the pending Western Great Lakes gray wolf delisting rule would serve both the residents of the Western Great Lakes area and the ESA.

Thank you for considering my request. I would be happy to discuss this matter further with your staff, and I am sure that Ms. Ragan would be willing to provide current details. ■

Sincerely,

Ronald L. Refsnider



Tracking the Pack

Three Subspecies, But Still All Wolf

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator,
International Wolf Center

For those of you who follow the lives of the Center's captive wolves through wolf logs, webcams and Youtube videos, you may already know that the Center is experiencing an historic event. It is the first time we are managing three age structures and three subspecies in the Exhibit Pack.

As the International Wolf Center, it is our mission to teach people about

wolves all over the world, not just the wolves found in Ely, Minnesota. Visitors can see the physical differences between the *arctos* subspecies that survives in the harshest climates in North America, the *nubilus* subspecies that has recolonized across the great lakes region, and the *occidentalis* subspecies that is making a comeback in the western

United States. Clearly, when one looks at the Exhibit Pack, one can see the differences, but there is more to this wolf exhibit than looks. The question is, do these subspecies act differently?

To help us answer this question and record the behavioral data, Center staff utilizes an Ethogram, developed specifically for the Exhibit Pack. So, What's an Ethogram?

Wikipedia defines an Ethogram as: "In ethology, an Ethogram is a catalog of the discrete behaviors typically employed by a species. These behaviors are suffi-

ciently stereotyped that an observer may record the number of such acts, or the amount of time engaged in the behaviors."

In our behavioral observations, a wolf is driven by innate behavioral responses to stimuli, and while physically different, the responses from each of these individual wolves are similar. If a wolf is exhibiting more dominance, tail responses, ear postures and facial expressions will show its

continued on page 13



A constant feature of the International Wolf Center's captive wolves is various types of interactive behavior.

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Susanne Wentz:

Holland Etheridge

In honor of
Joanne Wessels:

Sandy Eaton

In honor of Grizzer,
Maya, Aidan,
Denali and in loving
memory of Nyssa:

Christian Mueller

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on behalf of:

Lois Nichols

status. Conversely, a submissive wolf will lower its head, flatten its ears and roll to the ground, seeking acceptance from a more dominant wolf. A wolf will guard its food from any other pack member by showing a lip curl, then following through with a lunge display if threatened. Is there extra food after a meal? Caching behavior is witnessed with the wolf using its nose to tamp and cover the valuable resource. Regardless of the geographic region, the wolf has evolved to be a pack animal and these are the behaviors

necessary to communicate
and live in a pack.

Dog owners may even recognize these responses in the domestic dog, as many of these instinctual behaviors remain after thousands of years of domestication. If you would like to learn how to record the behaviors inherent to wolves and dogs, the Center has produced the Ethogram in a soft copy book or in a web-based DVD format that includes video clips. To purchase either of these Ethograms, check out the Wolf Den store at www.wolf.org. ■



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Wolves of the World

WOLVES IN ETHIOPIA

The Ethiopian Wolf – The Battle to Save an Imperiled Species

By Neil Hutt

“We should be moving to vaccinate the wolves.”

—Stuart Williams,
British Conservationist and Coordinator
of the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation
Project (EWCP), during the 2003 rabies
epidemic in Ethiopia's Bale Mountains.

Rabies. It's a frightening word. Primed by sensational novels, cult horror films and television medical dramas, many people associate rabies with a crazed animal in full attack mode, foam dripping from its jaws, teeth bared in a threatening snarl. Affecting the central nervous system and ultimately the brain, the disease usually progresses through three clinical stages—prodromal (malaise, lethargy), excitative (“furious rabies” during which facial spasms cause

the lips to retract) and paralytic. It is during the excitative stage that a bite from an infected animal most often transmits the virus.

Also called hydrophobia, rabies was first described as long ago as 3000 B.C. Although relatively rare in the United States where pets are routinely vaccinated, reservoirs of the virus remain widespread in many rural areas throughout the world. In developing countries, including large portions of Africa where dogs are a principal host, rabies is a major killer of livestock. In Ethiopia, the devastating disease is also a significant killer of the rarest member of the dog family—*Canis simensis*, the Ethiopian wolf.

Starting in the autumn of 2008, the current epidemic (some experts have observed that the outbreaks occur in cycles) threatens up to two-thirds of Ethiopia's wolves. Two



previous epidemics (1991 and 2003) decimated the already fragile Ethiopian wolf population in the core recovery areas in the Bale Mountains of southeastern Ethiopia. In that region, the afroalpine grasslands and heathlands of the Web Valley and the Sanetti Plateau are home to perhaps 300 Ethiopian wolves, more than half of the current estimated population.

During the 1991 outbreak, wolf numbers dropped from an estimated 450 animals to 120. Later, in October 2003 after 20 wolves died, the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP) mounted a concerted effort to contain the outbreak. Options included inoculating unvaccinated dogs in the region and enlisting local communities for help in monitoring the health of domestic animals. A rigorous vaccination program has inoculated approximately 80 percent of the estimated 40,000 domestic dogs in the region, a significant percentage of them herding dogs belonging to the Oromo people. Livestock herders, the Oromo settled in what is now Bale Mountain National Park long before the area became a park. But additional settlers moved into the region in 1991, and other groups migrate into the park during the grazing season, often bringing unvaccinated dogs.

In 2003, Stuart Williams, coordinator of the EWCP, insisted that the solution to containing the disease lay in vaccinating wolves as well as dogs, a step the Ethiopian officials were hesitant to take at that time because some people thought the inoculations had caused the deaths of African wild dogs in the Serengeti.



Martin Harvey

Wolf, jackal, or fox? Ethiopian wolves exhibit features of all three Canids.

But the current potentially devastating outbreak has spurred implementation of a plan devised by Dr. Claudio Sillero from Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) and Dr. Fekadu Shiferaw from the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Authority (EWCA) to create a "barrier" to contain the virus by vaccinating wolves in the recovery region. The goal is to live trap and vaccinate entire packs (typically a group of six adults) so that when they come into contact with unvaccinated dogs, they will not contract the disease.

When the current outbreak began last fall, the team of experts from WildCRU and EWCA knew that if they did not put a wolf vaccination plan into effect immediately, rabies could once again ravage the Ethiopian wolves and spread, further reducing the already perilously small population. Despite frigid temperatures at altitudes of above 12,000 feet, the researchers traveled on horseback and camped out in order to track and vaccinate the wolves. As of the end of October 2008, the team had vacci-

nated 46 wolves in 10 packs that connect the Web Valley wolf population with other wolves in the Bale Mountains.

As a species, the Ethiopian wolf remains something of an enigma. Questions about the taxonomy of *Canis simensis* have led to a variety of names for this rare African carnivore. Scientists still disagree on whether the animals are true wolves or "simian jackals." However, genetic analysis has some researchers concluding that the Ethiopian wolf is more closely related to the gray wolf and the coyote than to any African canid. Living in seven remote mountain ranges of the Ethiopian highlands, the Ethiopian wolf's diet consists mainly of Afroalpine rodents, Starck's hares, goslings, eggs, rock hyrax, young common duiker, reedbuck and mountain nyala. The wolves have a reddish-brown coat with distinctive white markings on the body and black markings on the tail. Weighing about 50 pounds, they have long legs, slender frames and long, slim muzzles.

The Ethiopian wolf's future is uncertain. Subsistence farming and overgrazing contribute to continuous habitat loss. Additionally, traffic deaths, gunshot mortality, hybridization with domestic dogs and disease all add to the population decline despite full protection by the Ethiopian government and stiff penalties imposed for killing a wolf.

Claudio Sillero views saving the Ethiopian wolf from extinction in a larger context. In his view, the entire highland ecosystem is at risk if the wolf disappears. Wolves are top carnivores, and they help control the rodent population and numbers of other native grazing herbivores. "The wolves reign there," Sillero says. "I like to think of them as the guardians of the high mountains of Africa."

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

Below: Some of the habitat of the Ethiopian wolf resembles a well kept rock garden.

Information Sources

- ❖ University of Oxford (2008, November 30). "Rabies Barrier To Save World's Rarest Wolf." *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved February 4, 2009, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/11/081119175533.htm>
- ❖ "World's Rarest Wolf Threatened by Rabies." RedOrbit News – www.redorbit.com.

For additional information about the Ethiopian wolf, visit the following Web sites:

- ❖ <http://www.arkive.org/ethiopian-wolf/canis-simensis/video-00.html>
- ❖ www.ethiopianwolf.org (Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme - EWCP)
- ❖ <http://www.wolf.org/wolves/news/iwmag/2004/spring/spring2004.asp> - See "Wolves of the World" article "Wolves of Ethiopia."



Two members of a litter of perhaps five Ethiopian wolf pups.

Martin Harvey

Martin Harvey

WOLVES IN BULGARIA

Hope for Wolves in Bulgaria

by Denise Taylor

In the tiny, rundown village of Vlahi, in the foothills of Bulgaria's Pirin Mountains, the new Large Carnivore Education Centre stands out on the hillside like a beacon. The building has risen from the derelict and ruined shell of an old stable block and now boasts a fully equipped exhibition hall and seminar room, accommodation for 18 people, and a café bar.

The Centre is the dream and vision of Elena Tsingarska who heads Balkani Wildlife Society's Wolf Research Programme. Elena and her husband, Sider Sedefchev, have worked hard to transform Vlahi. With the help of their extended family, they have breathed new life into the local community, while at the same time protecting ancient traditions and farming methods and lobbying to protect and conserve wildlife in the region, especially large carnivores. Bulgaria has an estimated stable population of 800-1000 wolves,

but they are afforded no legal protection, and no compensation is paid for loss or damage to livestock.

The Centre had its official opening in spring 2008 and now welcomes school children from all over Bulgaria and visitors from around the world. Workshops and seminars are also held at the Centre, and a cinema club where popular films will be shown is planned. This will give the project the opportunity to show wildlife conservation films either before or after the main feature film. If local people use the building as a community base, the project is likely to receive strong local support when it comes to running the Centre in the future.

There is still a lot of work to be done in Vlahi. Sider's organization, Bulgarian Biodiversity Preservation Society's Semperviva (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semperviva>),

operates a rare breeds center which is resurrecting the Karakachan breeds of sheep, horses and livestock guarding dogs. Pastoral farming, an ancient tradition in Bulgaria, is still relatively common today despite being nearly destroyed by the collective farms of the former Soviet regime. Livestock guarding dogs have been used for centuries and are one of the most effective methods of protecting sheep. Last year, a young dog (just eight months old) fended off an attack from a brown bear by jumping on its back. The Karakachan dogs also regularly ward off wolf attacks, especially when the flocks are grazing the higher pastures in the mountain.

The project is home to two captive wolves (Vucho and Bayto) and a brown bear (Medo). These large carnivores are ambassadors for their respective species, and visitors love to interact with them. Bulgaria still has entrenched negative atti-



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Elena Tsingarska listens intently for signals from her radio-tagged wild wolves.



Denise Taylor

tudes towards the wolf especially, and the media continue to fuel the perceptions of the wolf as a huge, scary beast. When visitors see the wolves at the Centre, they often comment about how different the animals are from what they imagined.

As well as providing education and learning at the new Centre, Elena runs a scientific wolf research program which includes scat analysis, tissue sample analysis from both dogs and wolves, and radio telemetry work. This research is helping to build a full picture of wolf ecology in two regions: Pirin mountains and Kraiste.

In the past year, work has also begun on the Wolf Management Plan with the help and support of Professor Alistair Bath from the Memorial University of Newfoundland. Bath is one of the world's leading human-dimensions experts and specializes in bringing together the

various groups with an interest in wolves (whether this is a positive or negative interest). He facilitates the groups working towards conservation solutions through consensus building.

Three workshops have been held so far. In the initial stages of this process, there tends to be antagonism among groups that oppose each other on a number of conservation issues. Foresters have one worldview, hunters another worldview, farmers another and conservationists yet another. Finding common ground means addressing some very thorny issues as well as exploring prejudices and biases on all sides. This is a learning process that promotes the essence of education in that it encourages critical thinking and reflection on



Wolf habitat in Bulgaria includes forested hills even close to villages.

Denise Taylor



Bulgarian wolves are really not that different in appearance or behavior from those in North America.

Denise Taylor

I have visited Bulgaria a number of times over the past few years, and I have seen this project develop and grow. It hasn't been easy. A lack of funding, strong opposition to large-predator conservation, and the sheer hard work of looking after over 300 animals day in day out, as well as

how much this small group of people has achieved in a relatively short time, and the new education centre in the Pirin Mountains stands as a proud testament to this. The Centre is an imposing and impressive building, a symbol of hope for large carnivore conservation. ■

conducting painstaking research and lobbying for political change all take time and unwavering dedication and commitment. I never cease to be amazed by

Denise Taylor is a professional wildlife conservationist with a primary interest in education. She is currently a director of the UK Wolf Conservation Trust (www.ukwolf.org), and founder and director of Education 4 Conservation (www.education4conservation.org) which aims to connect people and nature through art and technology.

For further information about Balkani Wildlife Society go to: www.balkani.org/index.php?language=en

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Personal Encounter

Close-Up with the Big Gray Ghosts

By Barry W. Babcock

On 25th of September, I decided to take my dog out for my first grouse hunt of the season. After walking about two miles on public land, we stopped to rest. I unloaded my gun and lit my pipe while my dog nosed around the area near me. My dog is a small, Springer Spaniel named 'Babs'. Shortly thereafter, Babs began to growl and cautiously walk away from me. I looked in that direction, curious about

**Much to my surprise,
a timber wolf appeared,
heading directly at us –
this is all within
twenty yards.**

what had her attention when I saw something moving through the thick cover towards us.

Much to my surprise, a timber wolf appeared, heading directly at us – this is all within twenty yards. The wolf stopped and looked at us and then started for Babs. I yelled at Babs, and she quickly moved behind me as the wolf seemed entirely focused on my dog – oblivious to me. Everything happened so fast, rendering it difficult to remember every detail but my primary concern was to protect my dog. The wolf by now was several feet in front of me and dead set on my dog. I grabbed the hat off my head and hit the wolf on its head as it was immediately in front of me, while I yelled expletives at it. The wolf backed off and paced back and forth as I moved forward, swinging my cap, but I was unable to get close enough to make further contact. The wolf left, with none of us harmed.

Needless to say, dog and I were somewhat rattled. I thought the best thing to do was to finish my pipe, regain composure, and let the wolf put some distance between itself and us.

After starting back, I heard something off to one side of the trail in heavy cover. Keeping my dog close at hand, I got a momentary glimpse of a wolf lopping off into the dense cover. Continuing on, I again, heard something paralleling us. Then, again, I got another quick glimpse of another large canine. It wasn't till about a mile from where the wolf episode began that it all ended.

Having time to reflect, I concluded the wolf was a yearling or large juvenile and that this is what it is to live in wolf country, feeling comfortable that Minnesota is not, at least yet, just another turkey/deer state, and that we all need to start thinking more "like a mountain"—grateful that there are still some places wild enough for the big gray ghosts. ■

Barry and his wife were owner/operators of a small motel in Hackensack, MN for 12 years. He is now semi-retired, writes, and does environmental advocacy.



Brady Babcock loves to hunt grouse with his Springer Spaniels. Encountering a wolf added to his fall enjoyment.

Babs, one of the Spaniels.



Barry Babcock

People for Wolves

Wolf Seminar

By Jerry Sanders

How do you give a wolf seminar that lasts two days, ten hours each day? Not a problem except that the approximately 2,000 people in attendance would be coming and going at their leisure, roughly synchronized with hourly tours. Tours which will take them into a huge enclosed area with 400 live bison. Jessie Turney called from the Bisonridge Ranch in Montello, Wisconsin asking if "I thought the seminar was feasible". I was intrigued but had my doubts. The presentations she had heard about us giving in the Horicon Wildlife Area and Kettle Moraine State Park, were given to "come in, sit down, stay for 90 minute" audiences. What Jessie was asking for seemed more like having a booth at a state fair with static displays. Then she mentioned the old barn.

Bisonridge has an annual open house at which they try to present the bison in light of its historical importance to North America. Jessie felt that given the intertwined relationship between the two species, bison and wolf, it made sense to emphasize both. But how could we portray the one in a live amphitheater and the other in a static booth atmosphere with skulls and various artifacts? The answer: the barn.

When I saw the barn it was perfect, one of the most beautiful, big barns I had ever seen. It was T-shaped. The foundation was constructed of native, field, granite hardheads. As I walked in the large door where they once backed in the wagon loads of hay I spotted the broad, oak staircase going up into the cavernous hay mow. What a great set of display shelves for our carnivore skull

collection. The pelts, books, paw prints and sculptures could all creatively adorn this wonderful stair-case. Where could we locate the mini-theater to show the hours of incredible, Bob Landis video which has become the mainstay of our presentations?

I opened a side door leading into the lower area of the barn. Here were the horse stalls with a large walkway down the center. This could be our theater. The 8 X 8 foot screen would fill the walkway. With the digital projector in the doorway we could show Bob's film of Yellowstone wolves and a bit of our own footage from Aylmer Lake, Northwest Territories.

On the day of the event you could hear the snorting of bison and the howl of wolves simultaneously. We had added a large map showing the locations of Wisconsin's wolf packs. A real eye-opening experience for our visitors was that some packs were within 30 miles of Bisonridge Ranch. We had a real Landis film festival, ten straight hours. A great deal of this film has never been on television. People who were waiting for the excursion into the bison enclosure spent time with us or came in afterwards. It was pleasing to see



Photos: Jerry Sanders

Above: Children are fascinated by skins, bones, and other wolf artifacts.

Left: A stairway in an old barn made a perfect place to display wolf artifacts.

so many doing both. The questions kept on coming, along with the snorting and the howling. The huge number of questions indicated, to me, a successful event. ■

Jerry taught high school mathematics in Flossmoor, IL for 30 years. Now retired, Jerry serves on the board of the International Wolf Center and enjoys annual wolf-observing trips to Yellowstone National Park and the Northwest Territories of Canada.

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Worldwide Wolves Essay Contest Winner

Following is the winning essay of the International Wolf Center's Worldwide Wolves Essay Contest in the 15-18 years old category.

Contestants had to observe International Wolf Center wolves in person or by webcam and describe how their behavior differed from that of dogs. Secondly, they had to identify two major challenges to wolf recovery and suggest solutions.

And the winner is . . .

Dai Zhang

from Wyoming High School,
Wyoming, Ohio

Call of the World

By Dai Zhang

The chilly morning air was tinged with anticipation as we waited expectantly in an open clearing, huddling together for warmth, much like the members of wolf pack. A shiver went down our spines as the Red Wolf Sanctuary tour guide beckoned to the wolves with the call of the wild. Finally, they approached—not in the foreboding manner depicted in children's stories—but with the shyness infants often display in front of strangers.

The wolves' initial reserve and subsequent tongue embraces gave me the impression of acquainting a friendly dog, but I immediately chided myself for making the mistake

conservationists fear: viewing wolves as domestic dogs. As if to confirm this, the fluffy creature in front of me suddenly nibbled the tour guide's hand rather aggressively. Several minutes later, another ignored him as he persistently beckoned to it. It is precisely this unpredictability and sense of self-determination that differentiates wolves from dogs. As filmmaker Jim Dutcher has said, dogs are the little children that, for the large part, are content with following orders while wolves are the teenagers, prone to unpredictable rebelliousness and self-decision. This desire to make their own decisions—complemented by a larger build, longer endurance, and more acute senses than even the most outdoor-oriented malamutes—has enabled the wolves to survive as predators and will continue to ensure their survival into the future. Just as



Stacy Montgomery

Teacher Stacy Montgomery's winning class from Wyoming High School – Wyoming, Ohio. Worldwide Wolves Essay Contest winner, Dai Zhang is pictured at far left.

a wolf, by initial instinct, will not want to be domesticated, conservationists are careful to never tempt the wolves into relying on humans even as they encourage bonding between the two species.

Even though domesticated dogs, especially sled dogs, show signs of bonding, teamwork is less essential for dogs under human supervision than for members of a wolf pack. While domination fights between dogs are brief skirmishes for food and power, domination displays between wolves create a hierarchy that serves to delineate the respective roles of each wolf. The Alpha wolf leads the hunting procedures, while the beta wolf looks after younger wolves and mediates fights within the pack. While female dogs and owners are chiefly responsible for raising puppies, males are equally responsible within a wolf pack.

Wolf recovery has met several obstacles throughout the decades. One problem is the concern ranchers have of nearby wolves killing their livestock. To pacify the ranchers, Wyoming passed Wyoming House Bill 213, requiring compensation for ranchers at seven times the value of livestock losses. A better solution for the nation as a whole, however, is more involvement at the state level to find wolf relocation sites in mountainous areas with large prey populations far from rural ranches and urbanized regions. Less interference from wolves on nearby human life will reduce lethal control or killing of problematic wolves.

A less political challenge to wolf recovery is misperception about the animal itself. Throughout literature, wolves have been portrayed as vile creatures that target humans and innocent animals, while, in reality,

wolves are usually afraid of humans and help preserve vegetation essential in carrying on ecosystems. Educating the public, as the International Wolf Center has done, using moderate objectives and reliable information will help clear up any misperceptions and allow wolf recovery credibility in the eyes of the public.

Hence, successful wolf recovery relies on, as Native Americans put it, balance and harmony. To benefit human kind and the biosphere, we must establish close bonds between wolves and humans, up close through wolf care and far away through reducing public misperceptions; however, we must still enable wolves to fend for themselves and respect humans' property and safety. ■



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A Look Beyond

Nez Perce Speak With Authority On Wolves (Opinion)

*Reprinted with permission from the Lewiston Tribune (Lewiston, Idaho),
written by editorial page editor Jim Fisher*

As the Obama administration considers removing from endangered species protection the Northern Rockies' gray wolves, it has heard appeals to do that from an Idaho governor who wants to be among the first to shoot one, members of a Legislature that refused to let state game managers have anything to do with their reintroduction, other hysterics who say the only good wolf is a dead one, and even a few reasonable people.

Then there is the Nez Perce Tribe, which has earned the ear of anyone who wants to see wolf populations in Idaho and neighboring states thrive and live in balance with other species in the region's magnificent backcountry. The tribe has not only proved it knows the particulars of wolves now in Idaho, but it has demonstrated its respect for wolves' historic place in the ecosystem.

And that place is not extinction.

For those reasons, when Chairman Samuel Penney of the tribe wrote Interior Secretary Ken Salazar that the tribe "fully supports the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service's decision to remove Endangered Species Act protections" from the region's wolves, you can bet Salazar will pay attention.

The tribe's support for delisting will go a long way toward dispelling questions raised by less reliable proponents of state control.

Among those proponents are people who opposed wolf reintroduction, including some members of the state's congressional delegation, and political leaders who have provided reason to doubt their sincerity in wanting to keep wolves around, like Gov. Butch Otter and even state Sen. Gary Schroeder of Moscow. Schroeder sponsored mock legislation requiring the Idaho Fish and Game Department to waste its time inquiring if other states want some of Idaho's wolves. He explained the bill's purpose is to force "the answer why we need to kill some."

**The tribe has not
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for wolves' historic place
in the ecosystem.**

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In the midst of such hardheadedness, Penney has told Salazar, "It is with great pride the wolf managers in Idaho write to affirm that wolf populations within the tribe's treaty territory and Idaho exceed the targets established by the federal government" and that it is "time for wolf management to return to local governments."

Idahoans who want wolves managed rather than demonized will welcome that statement, and point with great pride of their own to the tribe's continuing role in this great enterprise. ■

 [http://www.idahostatesman.com/opinion/
story/668082.html](http://www.idahostatesman.com/opinion/story/668082.html)



Issac Balabock