

Wolf Lines #141

The Bulletin of Wolf Council

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Idaho Rescinds Controversial Wolf Killing Plan

After meeting with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Fish and Game rescinded the state's controversial wolf killing plan. Blaming wolves for low elk numbers, the state plan proposed killing up to 75 percent of the wolf population in the Clearwater National Forest's Lolo District and repeating the killing if wolf numbers rebounded during the next five years. Under federal law; however, the state must demonstrate evidence that wolves are the primary factor contributing to declines in the elk population.

Federal officials determined that the state's scientific data did not support this claim. Further, overwhelming evidence shows that habitat conditions (e.g. harsh winters, fire suppression, increased hunting pressure, invasive weeds, etc) are the primary factors related to low elk numbers. Defenders would like to thank the more than 30,000 supporters who wrote in opposition to Idaho's plan. Your comments represented greater than 90 percent of the overall comments received in overwhelming opposition to this plan. However, this victory may be shortlived because Idaho may implement this plan once federal protections are removed for wolves if the state is allowed to implement its current wolf management plan. Watch for future alerts regarding any change in the status of wolves in the region. For more information, visit our Web site at: [Northern Rockies Wolves](#).

Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Population Update

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released their mid-year population estimates for the northern Rocky Mountain wolf population in the status report for the week of September 15-22. Preliminary estimates report 1,229 wolves, in 158 packs, with at least 87 potential breeding pairs throughout this region. These numbers reflect a 20 percent increase from the official mid-winter population count. Despite this increase, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks does not report any significant increase in the number of livestock killed or injured by wolves.

Oregon Should Welcome Wolves and All the Ecological and Economic Benefits They Bring

The following article was written by Defenders of Wildlife in response to recent wolf sightings in Oregon and offers an excellent reminder about ways the landscape can benefit with the return of wolves.

Oregon Should Welcome Wolves and All the Ecological and Economic Benefits They Bring

Yahoo Finance / PRNewswire

September 27, 2006

ASHLAND, OR -- Recent reports of one or more wolves potentially sighted in eastern Oregon are promising signs both for the wolf's continued recovery and for Oregon's future as a home for wolves. It's been six years since the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife confirmed a wolf sighting in our state. The first was in 1999 and there were two others in 2000. None of those wolves lasted long enough here to provide a hint of the ecological and economic benefits wolves provide to the states in which they live. But with the recent new sighting of a live wolf at Zumwalt Prairie, near the town of Enterprise, our state may yet have the chance to play a role in the continued recovery of this beautiful creature and sample all that wolves have to offer.

Wolves provide tremendous ecological benefits. They are the top predator in most environments in which they live and the trickle down effect of their presence is astounding. In Yellowstone, prior to the wolves' reintroduction in 1995, elk basically roamed wherever they chose and tended to spend most of their time in the river valleys. This excessive streamside grazing prevented willow and cottonwood tree growth along the river banks. But when the wolf returned, the elk quickly learned they couldn't set up permanent housekeeping in the valleys and they moved on to make a living in other areas. This, in turn, allowed young trees to grow along the riverbeds. The new trees shaded the river water, creating improved habitat for trout, which thrive in cooler, darker waters. The new willows and cottonwoods attract additional migratory birds and provided new food sources and building materials for beavers. The beavers then built dams which created new marshes and wetlands that in turn attracted otters, ducks and other species. Wolf kills also provided an abundant and reliable source of food for scavengers. And to be sure, wolf predations on old and sick elk have had a positive effect on the viability of the elk population itself. Multi-year research conducted by two Oregon State University departments of forestry professors in Yellowstone National Park and by local park biologists has sparked widespread agreement that returning the top dog to its native habitat yields far-ranging positive consequences.

Wolves provide tremendous economic benefits. Ecotourism is quickly moving to the forefront of family recreational activities. The longing to see animals in their natural habitat has created an economic boom throughout the United States. In Yellowstone National Park, fishing has always been a big industry and the improved environment along the river caused by the wolf's presence has improved fishing opportunities. The wolves themselves are also a huge tourist draw, with many people making Yellowstone their vacation destination

expressly for the purpose of seeing wolves. Indeed, most sunrises in Yellowstone are accompanied by rows and rows of nature lovers with spotting scopes, all straining for a glimpse of the elusive wolf. A two-year study conducted by a University of Montana economist and presented at the North American Wolf Conference in April 2006 reports that each year, tourists visiting Yellowstone hoping to see a wolf spend around \$35 million in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming, and that these dollars then turn over in local communities, boosting the regional economic impact to about \$70 million a year. On the other side of the country, a recent study, commissioned by Defenders of Wildlife and funded by the Alex C. Walker Educational and Charitable Foundation, investigated the potential contribution of red wolf-based ecotourism to local economic development in North Carolina and found that 89 percent of tourists showed an interest in visiting a proposed Red Wolf Center, an educational facility housing live red wolves. If only 10 percent of those Outer Banks tourists who say they will visit the Center and pay a \$5 admission fee actually made the journey, then it would be possible to generate more than \$1 million in gate receipts and food/gift purchases over a single summer season. A similar interest in eastern Oregon wolves could also attract tourism to this region.

Wolves pose little threat to livestock and humans. In fact, their prey of choice has been wild game like deer and elk for centuries. Although wolf predation on livestock is often highly touted in the media, it accounts for less than point two percent (0.2 percent) of cattle and calf losses, and less than two and a half percent (2.5 percent) of sheep and lamb losses in areas where wolves live. According to figures from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, and from the individual state agricultural statistics services in states with wolves, respiratory and digestive problems, weather, and other natural events account for the vast majority of livestock losses. In fact, in all areas where wolves live in the United States, far more livestock are lost to domestic dogs than to wolves. The notion that ranchers are suddenly going to start losing massive amounts of livestock because of the arrival of wolves is simply not backed up by the statistics.

The same is true for human/wolf interactions. Despite claims by wolf opponents, the fact remains that aggression by wolves against humans is a very rare event. A study published in 2002 found that in 80 cases of reported wolf-human encounters occurring from 1900 to 2000 in Alaska and Canada (and also including two in Minnesota), 69 percent of the incidents involved wolves that either had or were suspected of having rabies, were acting in self-defense, or showed interest but no aggression. Many of the instances involved wolves that had become habituated to humans by being fed or having access to human food sources, such as garbage dumps, which is a recipe for disaster with any wildlife. And several of the cases involved altercations between wolves and dogs (which wolves view as territorial competitors) in which humans intervened or got in the way and were bitten in the process. By way of comparison, each year in the United States an average of 17 to 20 people are killed by domestic dogs and more than 1.2 million dog bites are reported. In British Columbia, which has a wolf population numbering in the tens of thousands, the most dangerous animal humans encounter is the horse, followed by the moose, each of which is responsible for multiple fatalities each year.

Overall, the return of wolves to Oregon offers a unique opportunity to welcome back a returning native species.

Job Posting: Field Conservation Coordinator

Defenders of Wildlife is currently seeking applicants for a professional-level position involving a wide variety of responsibilities supporting the programs and operations of the Field Conservation Program Area as well as implementing assigned programs and work plans. This position will serve as the primary field conservation programs liaison to the field-based team members, other headquarters-based staff, and Defenders' members and the general public on program-related issues. Program and technical assistance will also be provided to other members of the division, with priorities being determined and assigned by the Vice President. Must possess a general knowledge of all field conservation programs and projects in order to assist with oversight and implementation of work plans. Position located in Washington, DC.

Volunteer Training Helps To Promote Wolf Recovery in the Northeast

The Coalition to Restore the Eastern Wolf (CREW), which includes Defenders of Wildlife, will be hosting seminars to train volunteers to reach out to northeastern communities about wolf recovery. Participants will learn how to discuss wolf recovery with various audiences, make a presentation about wolves, respond to "hot button" questions one might encounter and learn how to reach out to communities and policymakers. Each participant will receive a copy of CREW's PowerPoint presentation and a set of educational materials.

Training dates and locations:

Wednesday, October 18
Concord, New Hampshire
1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Thursday, October 19
Bangor, Maine
1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Participation is free but limited. Please contact Nadia Steiznor at crewinfo@earthlink.net, 845-679-5056, for details and registration.

Learn about Wildlife in the Gila National Forest

Join Wild by Nature for a wildlife watching field trip in the Gila Wilderness of New Mexico and experience America's first designated wilderness by learning about the natural history of the animals that make this area home.

Wild by Nature helps each person learn to spot wildlife in their habitat, recognize their tracks and sign, and understand their contribution to the ecosystem, as well as consider conservation issues. Wildlife such as black bear, mountain lion, elk, deer, antelope, bighorn sheep and a wealth of bird species inhabit the forest. At least four packs of reintroduced Mexican gray wolves occupy territories in the Gila National Forest.

When: October 27-29, 2006 (Howl-o-ween Trip) and November 17-19, 2006

Where: The Gila Wilderness and adjacent national forest

Who: Cynthia Wolf is a wildlife biologist with more than 20 years of field experience, including extensive familiarity with the wildlife of the Gila and a participant in wolf projects in ID, AZ and NM. Jean Ossorio is a veteran of more than thirty trips in the Mexican wolf recovery area and a member of the southwestern gray wolf recovery team. Both women have been trained as trackers and have tracked animals with the Sky Island Alliance's wildlife monitoring program.

Important details:

Trips will be limited to eight participants. No pets are allowed on the trips. Wild by Nature will provide all food and water, field guides, topographic maps, material for making casts of animal tracks and informational handouts. Participants are encouraged to bring a tent, sleeping pad and sleeping bag. If you don't own these items, please call Jean at (505) 644-7389 to arrange to borrow them.

Packing list:

- Daypack or fanny pack with two personal water bottles (total of at least 40 oz.).
- Warm, layered clothing and waterproof rain gear are a must. The weather in late fall can be extremely fickle.
- Sturdy hiking boots, preferably Gore-Tex lined, and waterproof socks.
- Personal items such as hygiene items, medicines, sunglasses and sunscreen.
- Flashlight and extra batteries, camera, film, binoculars, notebook and pencil.

Cost: Each trip will be offered as a basic three-day, two-night version for \$405.00 per person. The trip may be extended one or two additional days for \$135.00 per person, per day, by prior arrangement. Defenders of Wildlife's members will receive a \$40 discount on the basic three-day trip.

To register or obtain more information, please contact Jean Ossorio at (505) 644-7389.



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