

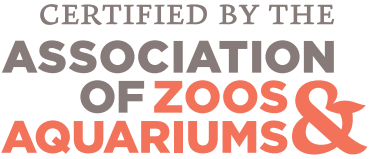
# COLORADO WOLF & WILDLIFE CENTER

AUGUST 2025 • CONSERVATION • EDUCATION • PRESERVATION



MEET  
**WALKER**





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**CWWC is now on Bluesky! Follow us: @cowolfcenter.bsky.social**



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*We hope to give you something to look forward to every day!*

**BIG NEWS FROM CWWC**



Say hello to **Walker**, our newest permanent resident! This handsome boy made his way to us from the heart of Texas, where he lived with a kind retired lady. Their bond was special, and this rehoming has been a win-win for both—Walker now has a new chapter to explore, and the lady knows he's in loving hands.

Walker's a little shy at first glance, but don't let that fool you—each day he's revealing more of his quirky charm and building trust with our team. He's got that quiet magic that makes you want to sit a little longer and listen a little closer. Come meet our beautiful new boy and see for yourself!

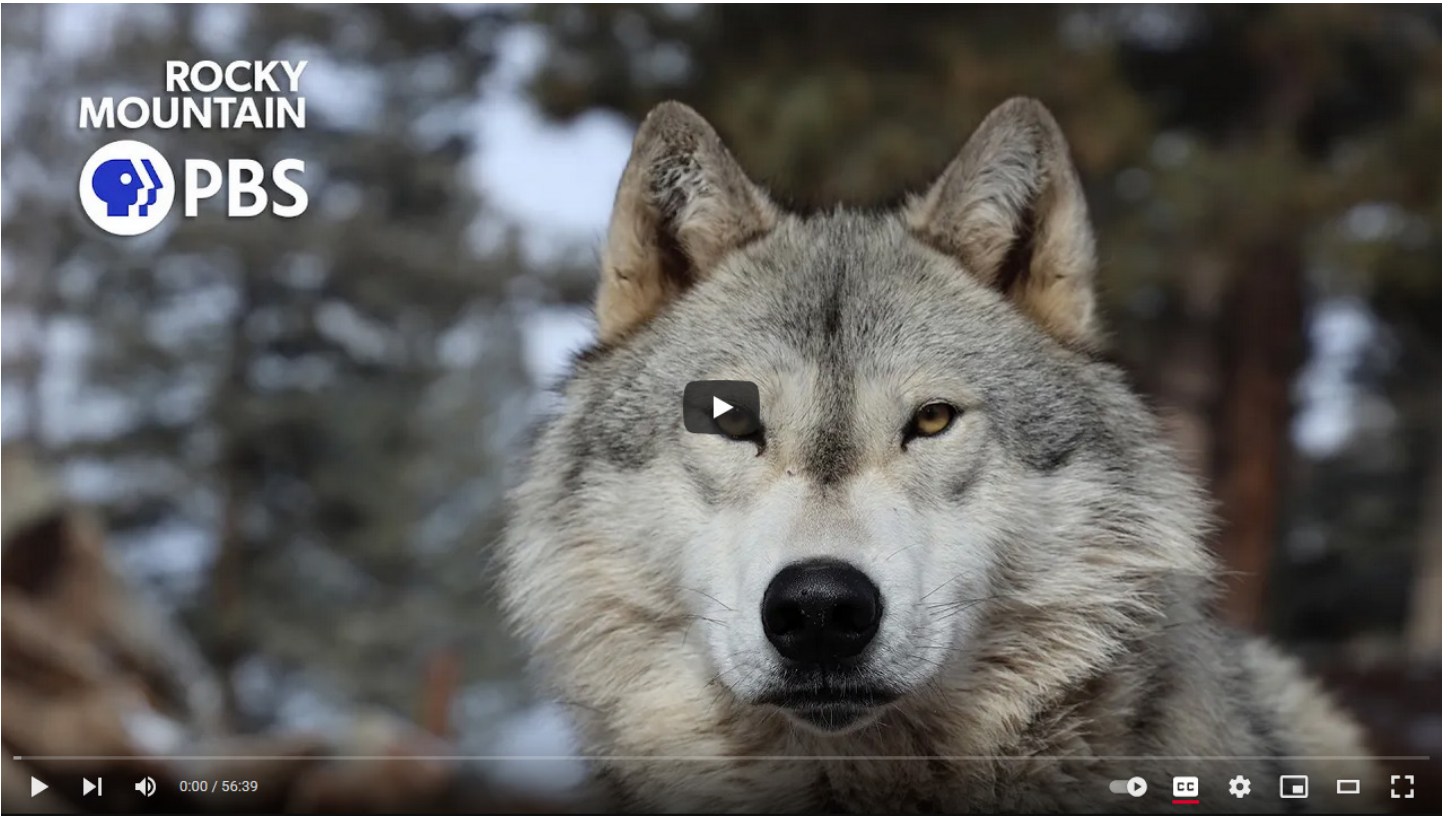
And guess what? Our last lone wolf, **Keyni**, is about to lose his bachelor status! This Thursday, he'll be meeting his new companion—and very excited. But here's where YOU come in...

**WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR GUESSES!**

- What do you think she looks like?
- What kind of personality might she have?
- How old do you think she is?

Send your thoughts and predictions, to [tours@wolfeducation.org](mailto:tours@wolfeducation.org).  
Let's make this a pack-wide celebration!

**"Return of the Wolf" wins Heartland Emmy Award**



**CLICK TO VIEW YOUTUBE VIDEO**

Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center was involved last year in a film about wolves in Colorado. This documentary was has won a regional Emmy award! Out of eight nominations, "Return of the Wolf" won for best topical documentary. This was one of six awards won for Rocky Mountain Public Media for the evening.

"I am proud of being able to have this opportunity to be a voice for the reintroduction of the Gray wolf into our state. Please enjoy."

– Darlene Kobobel







# Ghost wolves: As Idaho aims to reduce its wolf population, advocates worry counts aren’t accurate

Clark Corbin & Heath Druzin | Oregon Capital Chronicle | July 26, 2025

A member of Wapiti Lake Pack is photographed near the Firehole River in Yellowstone National Park in July 2020. The Wapiti Lake Pack is one of nine wolf packs that was living in Yellowstone as of December 2024.

Thirty years after wolves were brought back from near extinction in the U.S. Rocky Mountains, the state of Idaho is back in the wolf-killing business.

Based on direction from the Idaho Fish and Game Commission, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game is working to reduce the state’s wolf population by more than 60% over six years.

According to the Idaho Gray Wolf Management Plan 2023-2028, the state’s goal is to reduce the wolf population down from the estimated average of 1,270 wolves to a new average of about 500 wolves, with a low of about 350 wolves.

Based on the population dynamics in Idaho’s wolf population, the state estimates humans would need to kill about 37% of Idaho’s estimated wolf population each year for six years to reach the goal of an average population of 500 wolves

While nearly everyone in the wolf debate says it’s extremely difficult to get an accurate count of the animals within the state’s borders, some wolf advocates don’t agree with Idaho officials on how many wolves are actually in the state due to the research methods used until recently.

And some worry that if the state doesn’t have an accurate wolf population count, it doesn’t know how

many wolves should be killed under the management plan.

## Current wolf hunting, trapping policies a grim reminder of eradication campaign from the past, early wolf member of wolf management team says

Idaho legislators are driving the policy by responding to concerns from farmers and ranchers who have had animals like sheep and cattle killed by wolves.

Between 2014 and 2023, wolves in Idaho killed a minimum of 1,291 domestic livestock animals, according to state records. The losses affected 299 different ranchers and farmers.

But for Marcie Carter, one of the early members of the Nez Perce Tribe’s program that managed wolves in Idaho, the expansion of wolf hunting and trapping and the government-sponsored killing of wolves in Idaho is a grim reminder of the eradication campaign that nearly killed off all wolves in the U.S. Rocky Mountains by the 1940s.

Wolves are a native species in Idaho and all across the U.S. But as settlers moved West, the U.S. government passed wolf-killing bounties meant to encourage westward expansion. By 1926, rangers had killed the last wolves in Yellowstone National Park. The last wolf

in Idaho was killed in the 1930s, according to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

In one of the most successful and controversial wildlife comeback stories in American history, the U.S. government reintroduced wolves to Yellowstone and Idaho in 1995.

“We did all this great work, and we spent hours and hours out in the woods and then to come to this point where they’re treated like vermin, it’s really disorienting,” said Carter, who now works as the watershed coordinator for the Nez Perce Tribe’s Department of Fisheries Resource Management.

## The impact of wolves on livestock in Idaho

Having livestock killed is a big deal to the rancher who owns that animal.

But some wolf advocates say that, big picture, the number of livestock killed by wolves is pretty low every year.

From 2018 to 2022, there were an average of 259 livestock deaths each year in Idaho that were deemed “confirmed” or “probable” wolf kills, according to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. (Depredation is the term officials use when a predator like a wolf kills or maims livestock like cattle. Idaho Department of Fish and Game officials said “confirmed” or “probable” determinations are dependent on sufficient evidence remaining, which is dependent on very rapid detection and investigation of the carcass and minimal disturbance by scavengers. Those criteria often aren’t met in remote environments, therefore the documented “confirmed” and “probable” depredations should be considered a minimum number, Fish and Game officials said.)

That’s in a state with about 2.5 million head of cattle and 235,000 sheep – including on feedlots and dairies where wolves and other predators are not present.

That means wolves kill an average of about 0.01% of Idaho’s combined cattle and sheep population each year.

## How does Idaho estimate its wolf population?

All sides in the wolf debate agree it is extremely difficult to produce an exact population count of wolves in Idaho.

The state is too big, the terrain is too rugged and wolves are too elusive for that to happen.

Instead, officials use multiple different techniques to estimate that wolf population.

Until recently, Idaho Fish and Game officials used wildlife trail cameras and a statistical model to estimate the state’s wolf population.

Some outside researchers expressed concern with the accuracy of using wildlife cameras to estimate wolf populations.

Scott Creel, an ecologist and conservation biologist who works for Montana State University, has studied carnivores since 1987 and studied wolf-elk interactions since the 1990s.

Creel has been critical of wolf population methods used in Montana and Idaho.

“I was frustrated with seeing methods being used to estimate wolf numbers that were very indirect and, in my opinion, were unlikely to produce accurate estimates,” Creel said. “I was particularly worried that the methods I was seeing used would produce estimates that wouldn’t change, even if the wolf numbers were really changing. So the wolf population would appear to be constant, even though the policy changed just because of the way we were counting them, which is extremely oblique in both of the two methods that I was reviewing.”

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks declined an interview request for this story.

Creel stressed that accurately estimating wolf populations is extremely difficult.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game officials disagree with Creel’s criticism, but acknowledged trail cam population estimation methods become less reliable when the



A human hand shows how large this wolf print on the Blacktail Ponds Trail actually is.



number of images of wolves from the trail cameras declines.

In July 2024, Idaho Fish and Game announced a new wolf population estimation procedure.

Instead of using trail cams, officials are using new methods involving combination of genetic and information taken from a tooth of every wolf mortality documented by the state, information on the biological range of wolf population dynamics, a statistical model, and actual wolf hunting and mortality data.

It's called the ABC method, short for Approximate Bayesian Computation, which Idaho Fish and Game officials said has been used widely in other scientific fields like epidemiology and population genetics. Biometricians use that method to estimate the total number of new litters of wolf pups each year and the average estimated wolf population.

When he introduced the new wolf population estimate in July 2024, Idaho Fish and Game Wildlife Bureau Chief Shane Roberts said the new population estimation method independently produced similar population estimates to the trail cam method's population estimates from 2019 to 2022 using different data.

Roberts said that gives him confidence the new method produces consistent and reasonable population estimates. He also said it backs up the old trail cam method that outside researchers have publicly criticized.

"Although no population estimation technique is perfect, we now have an independent source of information that validates the camera-based estimates that we've been using to guide wolf management since 2019 and refutes the idea that those estimates are wildly erroneous, as some have claimed," Roberts said during the July 2024 Idaho Fish and Game Commission meeting.

But for 2023, the trail cam method and the new method produced different population estimates.

The new method estimated 1,150 wolves, while the trail cam method estimated 840 wolves, Roberts said.

Even though it has been a year since Idaho Fish and Game officials announced their new estimation methods, the methods do not appear on the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's website for public review.

Howl reporters Clark Corbin and Heath Druzin asked Idaho Fish and Game officials for a copy of the state's new methods for estimating the wolf population.

In March, Fish and Game officials said the only available information is a YouTube video of officials announcing their wolf population presentation. The relevant discussion takes place more than four hours into a six-hour Idaho Fish and Game Commission meeting on July 24, 2024.

Officials said they are working to publish their methods.

"We are in the process of preparing a manuscript for peer-reviewed publication on the method, which we hope to have submitted for publication later this spring or early summer," Roberts said in March.

As of June 24, the department had not yet published its new wolf population estimation methods in a peer-reviewed publication. Roberts said June 24 that officials are close to submitting it and hope to have it submitted for peer-reviewed publication before the upcoming July 17 Idaho Fish and Game Commission meeting.

Despite questions and criticisms of past methods, Roberts said he is confident in using the new population estimation to drive wolf management decisions in Idaho.

"Because we were able to produce five years of virtually identical estimates between (the new methods) and the camera-based methods we've used before, we are confident this transition will result in consistent information to inform wolf management in the state," Roberts said during the July 2024 Idaho Fish and Game Commission meeting.

### Why Idaho's wolf population estimate is important

Bob Crabtree, who founded the Yellowstone Ecological Research Center, said accuracy in wolf population estimates is extremely important.

"It's like asking a business owner to try to make a profit or try to avoid losing money by not knowing what items they have on the shelves that they stock in their store," Crabtree said. "Population size, or abundance, is the No. 1 criteria used to successfully manage and conserve and restore wolves. And without it, you just can't."

Many wolf laws and policies rely on wolf population estimates.

State Sen. Van Burtenshaw, a Republican rancher from the town of Terretton, Idaho, sponsored Senate Bill 1211, which Gov. Brad Little signed into law in 2021.

The law removed the limit on the number

of wolf tags hunters could buy each year, legalized wolf trapping year round on private property and allowed the state of Idaho to contract with federal agencies and other third parties to kill wolves.

Burtenshaw said he pushed for the law because his constituents told him there are too many wolves eating too much livestock.

"The big thing was the amount of farmers and ranchers that were dealing with significant losses because of the wolf population," Burtenshaw said. "Originally when the wolf was reintroduced, they were talking about 150 or something in the Idaho region. And we had well over 1,500, almost 1,600, for a long time. So the depredation cost was huge to those that had livestock and other animals as well."

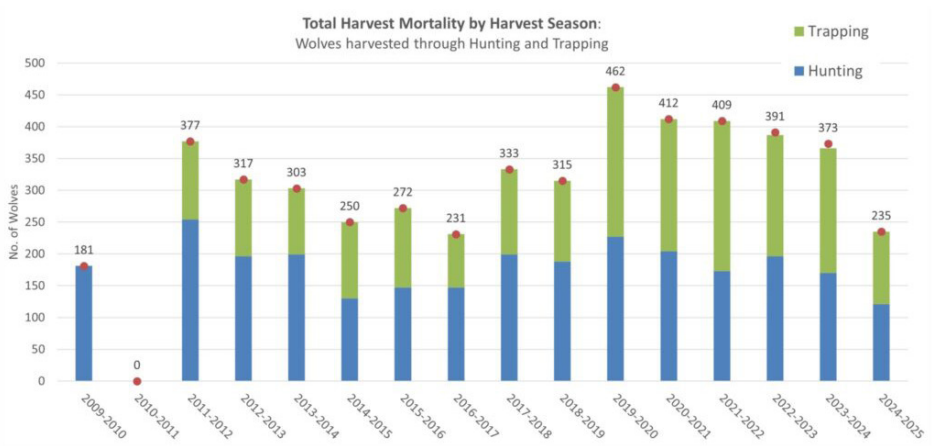
"That population has kind of got out of balance, and that's what we're trying to figure out is where that balance is," Burtenshaw said.

### The impact of wolf hunting in Idaho

Idaho sold more than 53,000 wolf tags to hunters in 2023 even though there are only an estimated 1,150 wolves in the state, according to documents provided by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

More than half of those wolf tags were sold in the popular "sportsman's package," which includes a hunting/fishing combo license and tags for deer, elk, bear, wolf, mountain lion, turkey, salmon and steelhead. (State officials said they do not know the percentage of hunters who bought a wolf tag because wolves are the primary animal they are hunting vs. the percentage of hunters who primarily hunted other animal species but still bought a wolf tag.)

From the 2019-20 wolf hunting season through the 2023-24 hunting season, hunters and trappers killed an average of more than 400 wolves a year in Idaho, according to



This graphic shows wolf hunting data in the state of Idaho from 2009 to 2025. Note the 2024-2025 season data is incomplete. (Graphic courtesy of Idaho Department of Fish and Game)

Idaho Fish and Game.

In addition to expanding wolf hunting and trapping, Idaho also financially reimburses expenses for hunters who successfully kill a wolf.

Since 2019, the state of Idaho has paid out \$849,750 in reimbursements to successful wolf hunters, according to data provided by the Idaho Fish and Game.

The money is Idaho Fish and Game funding that is transferred to the Wolf Depredation Control Board for the Foundation for Wildlife Management's reimbursement program, Fish and Game officials said. Separately, the foundation has applied for and received Idaho Fish and Game Commission Challenge Grants.

"Our end (goal) in this originally was focused on trying to direct the harvest where we were seeing the greatest impacts – chronic livestock depredation, elk populations below objective, where predation was a factor – to try to focus that effort where harvest at that time was not sufficient to stabilize the wolf numbers," said Idaho Fish and Game Deputy Director of Operations Jon Rachael, who was an original member of the wolf recovery team.

In the context of hunting, the word harvest means successfully killing a game animal such as a wolf.

The reimbursement money can be used for firearms, ammo, traps, trail cameras, gear, license fees, fuel and even ATV vehicles used to scout or hunt wolves, according to the foundation.

Rusty Kramer, the president of the Idaho Trappers Association, said he has used state reimbursement money to make payments on his truck, which he uses when he is tracking and trapping wolves.

The standard reimbursement in Idaho is capped at \$750 per wolf.

But in areas where elk populations are below their objective, or livestock have been repeatedly killed by wolves, the reimbursement limit increases to \$2,000 per wolf.

Some wolf supporters call the program a bounty system and scoff at the idea of the state sending checks to people who shot wolves to help pay off their trucks and ATVs.

But Idaho Fish and Game officials insist it is only a reimbursement program – not a bounty.

"Any of the funds that come from the state of Idaho, from the Wolf Depredation Control Board, or, in the past, from the Fish and Game Commission Challenge Grants did require that this money was not just a straight payment of a certain amount, but rather the individual claiming compensation present evidence of their



expenses,” Rachael said. “And so in that regard, it was compensation for their investment of buying traps or fuel to run a trap line.”

**U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed it killed juvenile wolves in Idaho**

When the state kills wolves, it doesn’t just kill adult wolves that are confirmed to have attacked livestock.

The state, other government agencies like the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services and third party contractors can kill wolf pups in their dens and their nursing mother – even if those specific wolves never attacked a cow or sheep.

“You can kill wolf puppies,” said Carter Niemeyer, a former government trapper who helped bring wolves back to Idaho and Yellowstone National Park 30 years ago and opposes killing wolf pups and many of Idaho’s wolf policies. “They’re plum legal if you kill them at a day old. Stomp their head in with your boot if you want to.”

Students at Timberline High School in Boise spoke out a few years ago after the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services killed wolf pups from a pack that the school symbolically adopted, the Idaho Capital Sun previously reported.

In an October 2021 letter to Suzanne Asha Stone, a prominent Idaho wolf expert and a member of the wolf reintroduction team, former U.S. Department of Agriculture Undersecretary Jenny Lester Moffitt, confirmed the government killed eight juvenile wolves in Idaho in an attempt to relocate the larger pack and reduce the number of livestock killed.

Carter, who was on the Nez Perce Tribe’s wolf reintroduction team in the 1990s, is sickened that the state would authorize the killing of wolf pups that never disturbed livestock.

“I mean, it’s one thing to shoot an adult,” Carter said.



Photo: Heath Druzin for the Idaho Capital Sun

Carter Niemeyer howls while looking for wolves just outside of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.

“But to trap puppies in the den hole? It’s just so awful. And I don’t understand how people can be that hateful to one species of animal that has a right to be here. But for sure, the state has not done their due diligence.”

“I’ll just stop there,” Carter added. “The state of Idaho is not taking care of this species.”

Since wolves were removed from the Endangered Species List in 2011, the USDA Wildlife Services and other agencies have killed 961 wolves in Idaho, according to Idaho Department of Fish and Game documents.

Since 2018, Idaho Fish and Game has spent \$817,668 on lethal control actions to kill wolves in Idaho, according to documents the department provided. That total specifically refers to Idaho Fish and Game funding through the Wolf Depredation Control Board that was not spent on reimbursements made by the Foundation for Wildlife Management.

One of Idaho’s policies is that even when nonlethal tools are available to reduce conflicts between livestock and wolves, the state can kill wolves without first trying the nonlethal tools.

“Livestock producers may use deterrents to aid in protecting their property; however, they are not a prerequisite for lethal removal,” the Idaho Gray Wolf Management Plan 2023-2028 states. “Regardless of use or success of nonlethal methods, landowners may request

a special kill permit from IDFG for use on lawfully permitted public and private lands. IDFG will continue to employ lethal removal as needed to address both individual depredations and overall population goals”

**30 years after wolf reintroduction, some of the people who brought wolves back worry about their future**

Longtime wolf advocates say the government-sponsored killing of wolves and expansions in hunting and trapping is reducing the number of wolves.

Now, 30 years after the first wolves were returned to Idaho and 14 years after they came off the Endangered Species List, several prominent members of the team that brought wolves back worry about the threats wolves face today.

Niemeyer is a longtime government trapper who has tracked wolves across Idaho and Montana since before reintroduction in 1995. Intimately familiar with wolves, he was a member of the team that traveled to Canada 30 years ago to capture wolves to reintroduce them to Idaho and Montana.

For years after reintroduction, Carter studied the packs and knew the location of many dens in central Idaho.

Niemeyer was so confident in his ability to find wolves that he regularly guided donors who supported conservation organizations into the wild to see wolves. He knew the landscape well enough he could set up camp just close enough for the donors to see and howl for wolves as Niemeyer cooked cowboy-style dinners for the group.

But those days are over.

Over the last few years, Niemeyer said he and his longtime contacts are no longer seeing wolves in the wild the same places they always used to.

“When they’re in there, they see virtually little or no sign of any wolf existence in the Frank,” Niemeyer said, referring to the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. “If you put together what I’m seeing, or better yet, what I’m not seeing.... Nobody’s finding any wolf evidence. So where are these 1,300 or 1,500 wolves?”

Niemeyer’s luck isn’t any better than his friends.

During a Howl reporting trip in July 2024, Niemeyer found wolf scat and wolf tracks, but no wolves. And during another, separate expedition in 2024, he said he struck out entirely – he didn’t even see a wolf track.

“The Big Buck Pack, Steel Mountain Pack, Jackson Pack, Archie Pack, I can name all these packs up there, Thorn Creek – there’s no packs in those places anymore, mostly because of domestic sheep that came in there and Wildlife Services just went to hammering wolves,” Niemeyer said. “And then you’ve got the recreational hunting and trapping that started when (wolves) were delisted.”

“You’ll still find a wolf track up in that country,” Niemeyer said. “But to say there’s anything like the numbers there were, I don’t believe it. You wouldn’t convince me.”

Carter worries about new expanded wolf hunting, trapping and lethal control policies in the state of Idaho.

“The state of Idaho is going to – if they haven’t already – plunge wolves back towards extinction, at least in Idaho,” Carter said.

“How do you manage if you don’t know how many you have?” Carter added.

She isn’t alone in worrying about the state management of wolves and the removal of limits on hunting and trapping.

“Is it a violation of our treaty?” Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee Chairman Shannon Wheeler said. “Is it a violation of something that we were meant to protect? Of course it is. Of course it’s a violation of what was here in 1855 and before then. And that’s a part of tamáalwit, or the unwritten law, which we know that Article Three and the Treaty of 1855 with the Nez Perce represents.”

Some members of the wolf reintroduction teams say attitudes are even worse today than they were 30 years ago.

“Our country’s worse now than it was in terms of polarization, so those extreme divisions have only widened and become more cemented,” said Stone, executive director of the International Wildlife Coexistence Network and a co-founder of the Wood River Wolf Project. “Back then, if I had told anyone from the opposition that didn’t want to have wolves back that they would be trapping and killing wolves 365 days of the year, using bounties to kill even pups in the den, they would have told me I was crazy and that would never happen – never happen. And we’re living it today. That is the reality on the ground today.”

Stone isn’t alone.

“Oh, I’m pretty worried,” said Doug Smith, who headed up the wolf program at Yellowstone National Park for nearly 30 years until he retired in 2022.

“Attitudes haven’t changed,” Smith said. “The fact is, they’re worse now. I’ve been studying wolves for over 40 years, and wolves have always been controversial. There’s always been people who like wolves and people who hate wolves. Now it’s like people are willing to do anything to get rid of wolves or anything to protect wolves, and they don’t want to talk to each other. I don’t think that’s progress, and right now the anti-wolf forces are winning in Idaho and Montana especially.”



Photo: Pat Sutphin for the Idaho Capital Sun

Doug Smith, who headed up the wolf project at Yellowstone National Park for nearly 30 years ties his shoelaces before setting out on the trail to scout for wolves on July 10, 2024, at Yellowstone National Park





Dear Colorado Wolf  
And Wildlife Center,  
I Thank you so  
vely Much For Making  
This Wonderful experience  
Possible I learned so much  
about your amazing  
creatures it was a  
Wonderful trip!  
~ Abigail Wren

Dear Wolf and wildlife  
center,

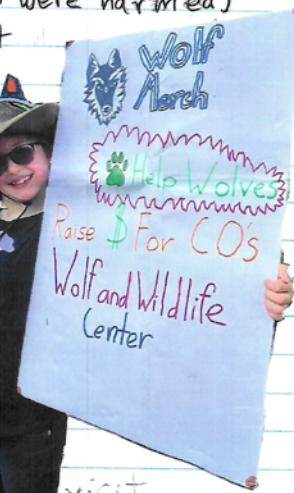
You showed how fun  
wolves can be and  
how cute they can  
be !!!



Dear Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center,

My name is Josie and I'm 10. I'm writing  
to say that I love what you're doing.  
Since the time that I was six, I have loved  
wolves so, so much, I'll be touring the center  
on Sunday, August 3rd. Me being me I wanted  
to come with a donation. No not \$5, not \$10, not  
\$20, \$30 \$40 \$50, \$60, \$70, \$80 or \$90!  
Not even \$100! No, I'm talking about  
\$475! To raise this, I did a wolf stand.  
No lemonade from THIS kid, I sold wolf ear  
headbands (no actual wolves were harmed)  
bubbles (you might know this but  
wolves in captivity love bubbles)  
and stickers that say  
Wild and Wonderful with  
a howling wolf silhou-  
ette on them (I  
designed them myself)  
I also did face paint-  
ing.

Thank you for  
listening to my letter,  
I'm very excited to

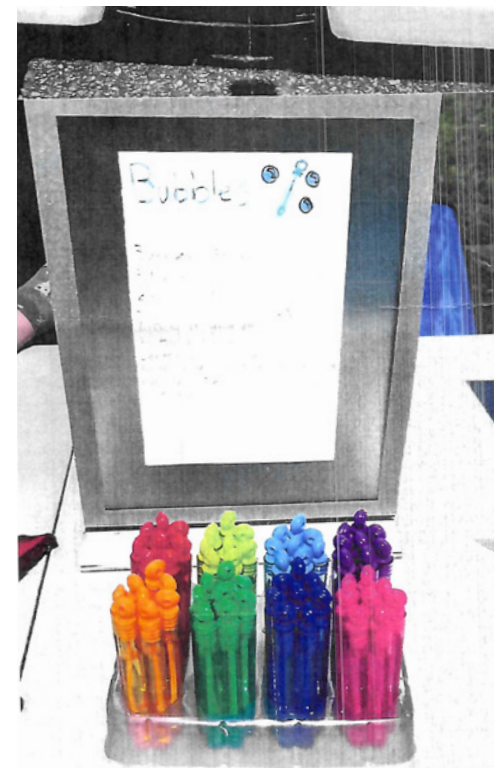
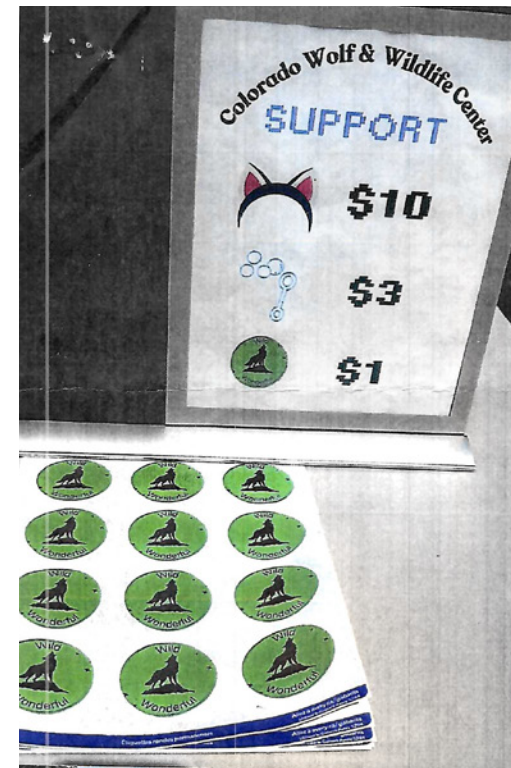
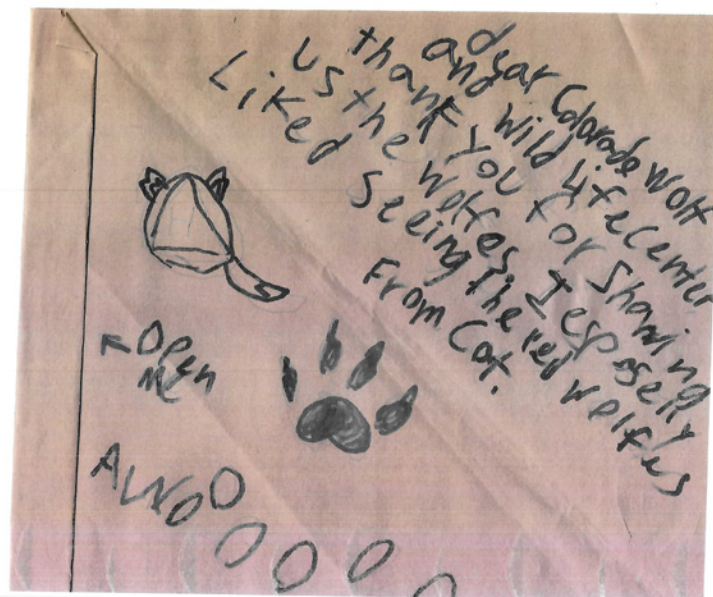
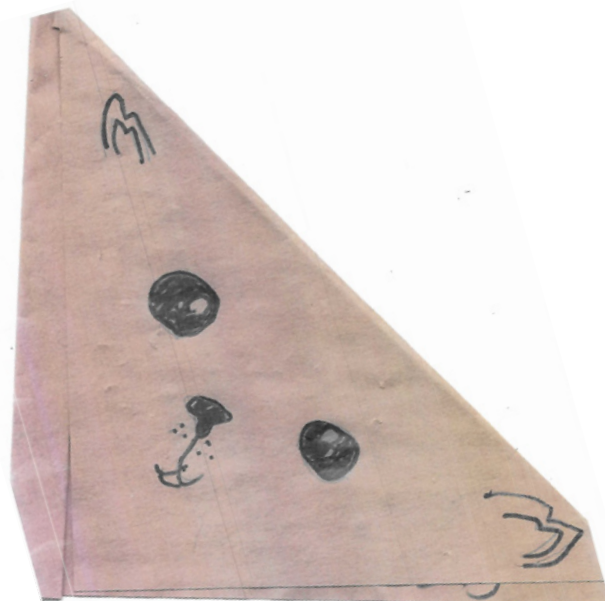
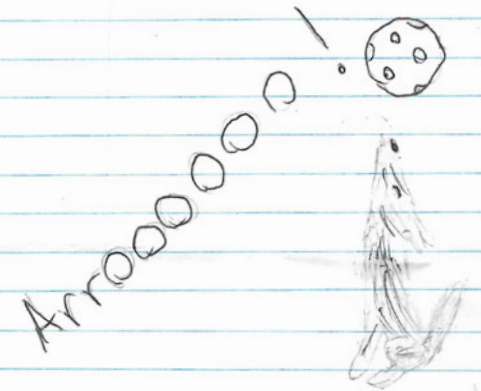


I'll bring the donation when I do.

As your fellow wolf lover and human  
I say goodbye for now.

For the wolves,

Josie





# Keep Your Hummingbird Feeder Bee-Free With These Expert Tips

Arricca Elin Sansone | Country Living | July 22, 2025



We love bees! As pollinators, they have a big job to do in our gardens and offer many benefits to our outdoor spaces. “Bees contribute to soil health, act as natural pest controllers and play a vital role in the ecosystem,” says Chad Witko, specialist in avian biology at the National Audubon Society.

Yet sometimes bees may crowd around our hummingbird feeders and keep our invited guests away. It’s really no mystery why: “Bees and wasps are attracted to the nectar found in hummingbird feeders, which provides them a source like that of flowers,” says Witko.

However, it’s discouraging if too many insects gather on your feeder because then hummingbirds may not visit. “Although hummingbirds can co-exist with most insects, aggressive species such as hornets or wasps, especially in large quantities, may deter them from feeders,” says Witko.

Ahead, here’s what you can do to keep the bees happy—but away from your hummingbird feeders:

## Hang multiple feeders.

This may reduce competition with insects, and it also benefits hummers, which are territorial about nectar sources.

## Use saucer-style feeders.

“Tube feeders make nectar more accessible to

bees due to gravity,” says Witko. “Saucer feeders generally require a hummingbird’s long tongue, as long as bees don’t access the ports.”

## Choose feeders without yellow components.

Bees tend to be more drawn to feeders with yellow parts, such as bee guards (the fine mesh cover over feeding ports).

## Move your feeder.

If bees become a problem, periodically moving the feeder will help keep it insect-free for some time.

## Keep feeders clean.

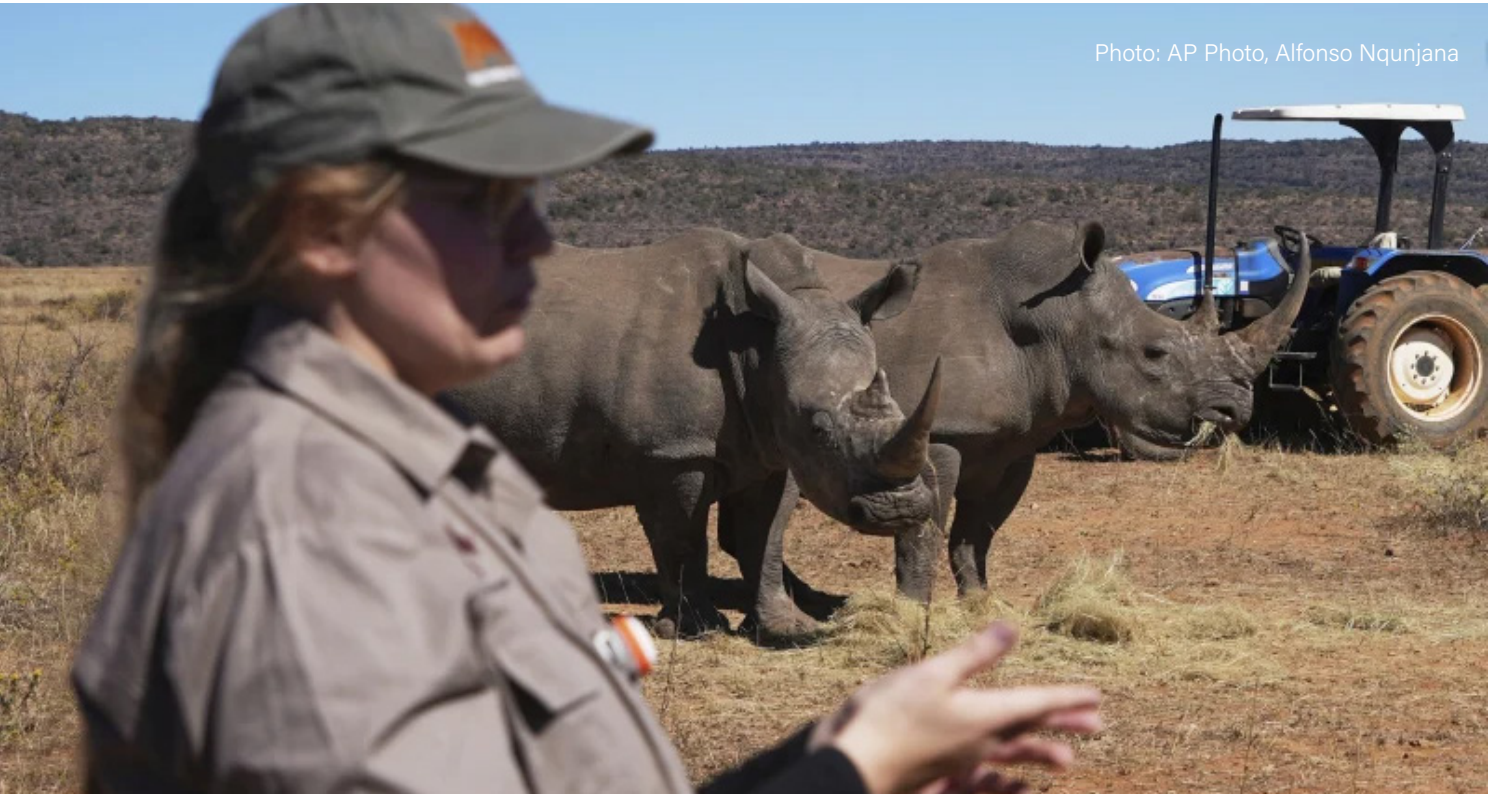
This helps maintain a healthy environment for hummingbirds, and it removes any stickiness, which can attract bees. Clean feeders every two to three days under normal conditions, or every other day in hot weather or any time the nectar looks cloudy or insects have drowned in it. Use hot water and a bottle brush to clean inside and around all the ports, but never use soap which can leave harmful residues, says Witko.

## Change the nectar regularly.

Nectar can spoil and harm birds.

## Plant pollinator-friendly flowers.

Native plants that bees love give them another option. You also support hummingbirds by providing many other choices for feeding in your garden.”



# Scientists in South Africa are making rhino horns radioactive to fight poaching

Associated Press | July 31, 2025

MOKOPANE, South Africa (AP) — A South African university launched an anti-poaching campaign Thursday to inject the horns of rhinos with radioactive isotopes that it says are harmless for the animals but can be detected by customs agents.

Under the collaborative project involving the University of the Witwatersrand, nuclear energy officials and conservationists, five rhinos were injected in what the university hopes will be the start of a mass injection of the declining rhino population.

They’re calling it the Rhisotope Project.

Last year, about 20 rhinos at a sanctuary were injected with isotopes in trials that paved the way for Thursday’s launch. The radioactive isotopes even at low levels can be recognized by radiation detectors at airports and borders, leading to the arrest of poachers and traffickers.

Researchers at Witwatersrand’s Radiation and Health Physics Unit say that tests conducted in the pilot study confirmed that the radioactive material was not harmful to the rhinos.

“We have demonstrated, beyond scientific doubt, that the process is completely safe for the animal

and effective in making the horn detectable through international customs nuclear security systems,” said James Larkin, chief scientific officer at the Rhisotope Project.

“Even a single horn with significantly lower levels of radioactivity than what will be used in practice successfully triggered alarms in radiation detectors,” said Larkin.

The tests also found that horns could be detected inside full 40-foot shipping containers, he said.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature estimates that the global rhino population stood at around 500,000 at the beginning of the 20th century but has now declined to around 27,000 due to continued demand for rhino horns on the black market.

South Africa has the largest population of rhinos with an estimated 16,000 but the country experiences high levels of poaching with about 500 rhinos killed for their horns every year.

The university has urged private wildlife park owners and national conservation authorities to have their rhinos injected.





Photo: JGerald Corsi, Getty Images



A photo taken in 1933 showing Yellowstone aspen groves stripped of bark and leaves by elk. (National Park Service, 1935)

generation of aspen trees, the first to form an overstory in the park since the 1940s. These stands of trees, which have now officially survived past their fragile sapling state, are testament to the success of the wolf reintroduction program, and the importance of top predators in



Two gray wolves stand over the bloodied remains of a bull elk in Yellowstone National Park. (Jared Lloyd/Getty Images)

maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

"The reintroduction of large carnivores has initiated a recovery process that had been shut down for decades," says Oregon State University ecologist Luke Painter, who led the study.

"About a third of the 87 aspen stands we examined had large numbers of tall saplings throughout, a remarkable change from the 1990s when surveys found none at all." Among the aspens, Painter and team define in their paper,

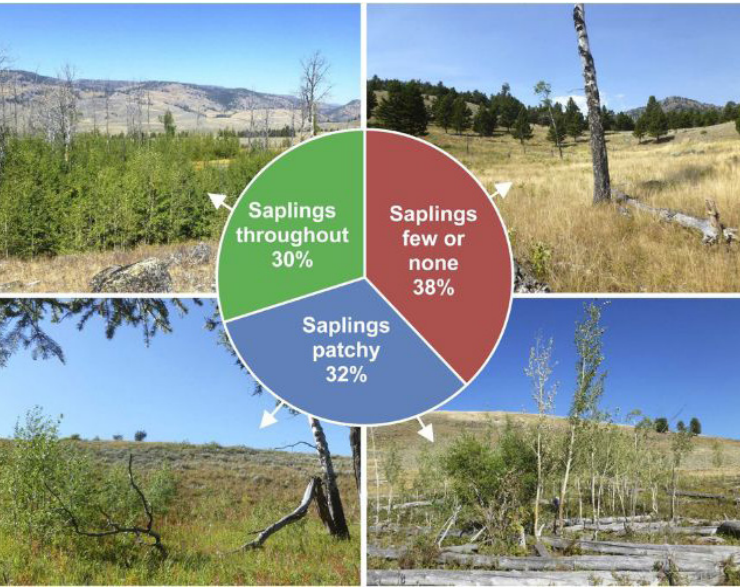
saplings are shorter than 2 meters (around 6.6 feet), or those with trunks slimmer than a 5 centimeter diameter at breast height (dbh); trees have trunks with a dbh above 5 centimeters.

Of all the stands they sampled, 43 percent contained new, small trees that had surpassed that diameter cutoff. And since 1998, the density of saplings over 2 meters tall has increased 152-fold, which means there are now many more chances for long-term survival.

To ensure that this effect was due to the return of wolves to the park, and not other factors like climate, the team also measured the rates at which the elk ate the trees. Aspen stands with many tall saplings, they found, had much lower browsing rates, while other stands that continue to be chewed back by elk were not producing these new forest recruits.

This, Painter says, is a sure sign the trees' recovery is part of a top-down trophic cascade.

"This is a remarkable case of ecological restoration," Painter says. "Wolf reintroduction is yielding



Stand conditions in 2020–21 varied widely: 30 percent of stands had saplings throughout, 32 percent had patchy sapling recruitment, and 38 percent had few or no saplings. (Painter et al., Forest Ecol. & Mgmt., 2025)

long-term ecological changes contributing to increased biodiversity and habitat diversity."

This research was published in Forest Ecology and Management.

# Yellowstone's Aspen Forests Are Already Responding to The Return of Wolves

Jess Cockerill | Science Alert | July 30, 2025

Aspen forest is reclaiming the skyline of Yellowstone National Park after decades of controversy over efforts to return wolves to the ecosystem.

The successful growth of a new Aspen overstory for the first time in 80 years validates the efforts of conservationists who have fought to protect and restore predators for their role in keeping the park's ecosystems self-sustaining.

Critical links between populations of gray wolves (Canis lupus) and quaking aspen trees (Populus tremuloides) weren't obvious when the canine predator was eradicated from the park in the 1920s; a result of government control programs that encouraged people to hunt predators like wolves, coyotes and cougars.

Among the wolves' prey are the elk Cervus canadensis that gnaw at aspen and cottonwood saplings and trample exposed soils with their hooves. Controlled by natural predators, the elk's numbers – and therefore damage from chewing and trotting – is limited. But in the absence of wolves, their population swells and their taste for saplings leads to overgrazing.

As early as 1934, a team of scientists noted "the range was in deplorable condition when we first saw it [in 1929], and its deterioration has been progressing steadily since then."

As old aspen stands died, there were no new trees to

take their place. Species that rely on mature aspen, like beavers and cavity-nesting birds, were left stranded. Without wolves, the ecosystem was falling apart.



A photo taken in 1933 showing Yellowstone aspen groves stripped of bark and leaves by elk. (National Park Service, 1935)

It took decades of petitioning, but by 1995, wolves were reintroduced to the park. After finding their feet, a population introduced from Jasper National Park in Canada settled into their role of hunting elk and, indirectly, protecting young trees. With few or no remaining overstory trees, many of today's aspen stands are expected to die without saplings.

Now, after thirty years, these wolves have raised a new



# After Almost a Century, Wolves Return to Peloponnese, Greece

Filio Kontrafouris | Greek Reporter | July 30, 2025

After having vanished for almost a century from the Peloponnese in southern Greece, wolves have returned to the peninsula's Mount Taygetus, according to a recent announcement by Callisto, a Greek environmental organization.

The presence of wolves in the Peloponnese is scientifically proven for the first time in almost one hundred years through the environmental research conducted by Callisto. In a statement, the organization said cameras that had been placed in strategic points in November 2024 had recorded the presence of nine wolves (four adults and five young) in the area of Mount Taygetus, the mountain range near ancient Sparta. Moreover, their presence was further confirmed by wolf tracks and feces, and by a photo of a dead wolf hit by a car in the same area, presented to Callisto by a hunting organization.

Wolves vanished from the Peloponnese in the late 1930s due to human intervention and activities. The confirmed return of the species in the area is considered a landmark for biodiversity in Greece because it means that nature is slowly recovering. At the same time, it stresses the need for a balance

between human activities (like livestock farming) and the protection of wildlife.

## How Callisto conducted this year's research on tracking wolves in the Peloponnese

Though there have been reports about the presence of wolves in the Peloponnese since 2019, Callisto conducted its first study last year in the northern Peloponnese, during the spring and summer. They used 14 automatic cameras for two months, operating 24 hours a day. However, at that time no presence of wolves was recorded.

After the killing of 40 goats and a dog in the area in October 2024, Callisto's scientific teams placed four automatic cameras around where the animals were killed and researched a total of 30 kilometers of forest roads in November. Soon after, the wolves were spotted.

Apart from Mount Taygetus, the environmental organization conducted further research in other parts of the Peloponnese but there have been no indications that wolves have reappeared in other parts of the peninsula.

Callisto was founded in 2004 by a group of scientists dedicated to preserving and protecting Greek nature and wildlife. The organization's main goals are studying, protecting, and managing "the populations and habitats of large carnivores, bears and wolves and other endangered species of wildlife."

They also hope to "improve the coexistence of man and



Wolf populations in Peloponnese reappeared after a century. Photo: Gunnar Ries/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 2.5

wildlife," which includes educating the public on Greek wildlife, and how to act if they encounter a wolf.

The organization's scientists monitor the populations of these carnivores in Greece, and helps to preserve their habitat by advocating against major human interventions, such as real estate developments, on land inhabited by the animals.

## Wolves in Greece and the country's endangered biodiversity

According to Callisto, there are currently 700 wolves (though other estimates say about 1,000) across most of mainland Greece north of the region of Boeotia. The wolf used to be found across the entire northern hemisphere yet, largely due to systematic hunting pushing it to the brink of extinction, it has lost most of his historical territory.

In Greece it survives in small packs, isolated from each other, and its presence is stronger close to areas with livestock farming or in big, mountainous ranges where human presence is very limited. The depletion of a wolf's natural prey, including deer, roe deer and wild boars, forces the wild animal to move closer to where farmers breed sheep, cows and goats and this exacerbates the

clash between wolves and humans.

The fauna in Greece is incredibly diverse. The mountainous regions of the country, especially the forests, play host to bears, wild cats, brown squirrels, jackals, wolves, foxes, deer and lynxes. A rare species of wild goat, known as kri-kri, inhabits the mountainous regions of Crete.

There are 116 species of mammals in Greece with 57 of them categorized as endangered species, including the brown bears of Epirus. For the protection of brown bears, wolves, snakes, and other endangered species, many environmental organizations have been established, such as Arcturos that works for the preservation of wildlife and the natural environment.

Recently, the Greek Environment Ministry re-evaluated the country's Red List and said that more than a fifth of the 11,500 endangered animal, plant, and fungi species in Greece are "critically endangered" and thus are under threat of extinction.



Wolves have returned to the Peloponnese, Greece after almost a century. Photo: Callisto



# 'Robo-Bunnies' Are the Newest Weapon in the Fight Against Invasive Burmese Pythons in Florida

Scientists are experimenting with robotic rabbits in hopes of luring the destructive snakes out of hiding so they can be euthanized



Photo: Robert McCleery

Sarah Kuta | Smithsonian Magazine | July 21, 2025

Wildlife biologists in Florida are doing everything they can to eradicate invasive Burmese pythons, from hosting public hunting challenges and hiring bounty hunters to affixing tracking devices to male "scout" snakes that can lead them to large, reproductive females.

Now, they've come up with an innovative new tool to help battle the destructive snakes: robotic rabbits.

Scientists at the University of Florida are deploying the so-called "robo-bunnies" throughout South Florida in hopes of drawing Burmese pythons out of their hiding places so they can be euthanized, reports Kimberly Miller for the Palm Beach Post. By luring the pythons to the rabbit look-alikes, biologists can save time that might otherwise be spent searching through the swamp for the snakes.

The animatronic rabbits are outfitted with motors and internal heaters that are designed to replicate the behaviors and body temperatures of live marsh rabbits

(*Sylvilagus palustris*), which Burmese pythons love to eat.

The South Florida Water Management District is funding the robotic rabbit experiment, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has paid for related research in the past.

"Our partners have allowed us to trial these things that may sound a little crazy," says Robert McCleery, a wildlife ecologist at the University of Florida who's leading the rabbit project, to the Palm Beach Post. "Working in the Everglades for ten years, you get tired of documenting the problem. You want to address it."

In the past, researchers have experimented with placing live rabbits in pens in a bid to attract the invasive serpents in Everglades National Park. The live rabbits were indeed effective at luring the snakes, drawing in about one per week, but caring for and managing the small mammals was labor-intensive. Researchers wondered if robotic rabbits might do the

job just as well.

To find out, McCleery and his colleague Chris Dutton gathered 40 toy rabbits and replaced their stuffing with electrical components that run on solar power. They also waterproofed the bunnies so they could withstand South Florida's rain and humidity. Earlier this month, scientists placed the rabbits at various undisclosed locations for a pilot study to see whether they could fool the snakes.

"If we can see a statistically significant number of pythons that are coming to investigate these robotic rabbits and the pens, that would be a success, because right now, pythons do a great job of staying hidden," says Mike Kirkland, lead invasive animal biologist for the South Florida Water Management District, to WINK-TV's Bridget Bruchalski.

The remotely controlled decoys are accompanied by tiny cameras that have been programmed to recognize movement. When a python (or some other snake) slithers by, the camera sends out a notification, which prompts researchers to tune into the video feed to see what kind of snake is approaching.

"If that python is detected, then it contacts someone like myself, who's available 24 hours a day, and then I can deploy one of our many contractors to go remove it," Kirkland tells WINK-TV.

If the initial experiment fails



The robo-bunnies emit heat and move—just like real marsh rabbits do. Photo: Robert McCleery

to attract pythons, the scientists plan to run a second round of tests with realistic rabbit scents added to the mechanical creatures.

"We want to capture all of the processes that an actual rabbit would give off," McCleery tells the Palm Beach Post.

Burmese pythons are native to Southeast Asia but began arriving in the United States in the 1990s and early 2000s as part of the exotic pet trade. At some point, these pet snakes either escaped or were released into the wild, where they quickly adapted to life in Florida.

With few natural predators keeping them in check, the snakes have been proliferating in the Everglades—and the region's rabbits, foxes, opossums and raccoons have had to pay the price. A 2015 study found Burmese pythons were responsible for 77 percent of rabbit deaths in Everglades National Park.

Experts say it will probably be impossible to fully eradicate Burmese pythons from Florida. But in the meantime, conservationists and biologists are doing their best to make a dent in the population.

The annual Florida Python Challenge, for instance, invites members of the public to kill and remove as many Burmese pythons as possible over a ten-day period for a chance at winning \$10,000. This year's event wrapped up on July 20.



If the initial experiment fails, researchers next plan to add realistic rabbit scents to the decoys. Photo: Robert McCleery

Hunters on private land are always allowed to humanely euthanize the snakes without a permit, so long as they have the landowner's permission. They can also humanely kill Burmese pythons on specific public lands managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Anyone who sees a Burmese python is encouraged to call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's exotic species hotline.

The South Florida Water Management District and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have also deployed python bounty hunters, who have removed nearly 16,000 of the snakes since 2019, per the Palm Beach Post.



# The Trump administration’s repeal of the roadless rule could threaten wildlife

A 2001 policy restricts road construction on Forest Service land. What happens to at-risk species if it’s removed?

Shi En Kim | High Country News | June 31, 2025



Early this June, scientists and conservation groups confirmed the first lynx kittens born in the Kettle Range, Washington. Photo: Elizabeth Odell/Colville Tribes

After four years, the long-awaited signal arrived on the computer: Rose Piccinini, a wildlife biologist for the Colville Tribes, saw the telltale clusters of converging lines from GPS trackers that identified the dens of an elusive wild animal. Two weeks later, she and a team of five hiked through dense deadfall and clawing vegetation to reach their targets: two families of lynx kittens, the first confirmed litters born in the area in four decades.

The kittens are the fruit of a rewilding effort led by the Colville Tribes to restore Canada lynx in the Kettle River Mountain Range in northeastern Washington, after overtrapping had extirpated them in the 1980s. The plan was to trap up to 50 lynxes in British Columbia over five years and transplant them across the border. The kittens were “the culmination of years

and years of work,” Piccinini said. But now, shifting federal policy might affect the lynx’s future, along with that of the many other sensitive species that dwell in road-free areas in the country’s forests. The same month, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced the rescission of a 2001 rule that bars road construction and timber harvest on 58.5 million acres of Forest Service land. The grounds where the lynx kittens were born would be among those subject to the rule’s repeal. Still, some environmentalists remain optimistic that the Kettle Range lynx still has a chance. “It depends on if (federal officials)



A Canada lynx is released by the Colville Tribes in 2023. Photo: Colville Confederated Tribes Fish & Wildlife

lifted the roadless rule, what they are going to do in the areas where the lift came off,” said Cody Desautel, executive director of the Colville Tribes. Lightly used roads primarily for fire management would likely have little impact on the lynx’s recovery, compared with clear-cutting or mining. What happens next, his team — and the lynx — will have to wait and see. Growing awareness of the ecological importance of roadless areas was a major driving force behind the roadless rule’s adoption in 2001. The road-free landscapes the Forest Service manages often encircle protected natural areas, forming the connective tissue between national parks and designated wilderness areas for wildlife to roam across the whole landscape. Roads and their construction can disturb these areas, potentially encouraging the foray of invasive species, polluting watersheds and threatening food sources for the animals that dwell within. In the case of the lynx, densely vegetated forests are a requirement for denning and breeding, as is the thick snowy ground cover that enables them to make good on their hunting specialty: skimming the surface to hunt snowshoe hares in winter. Today, however, the Trump administration has shifted Forest Service priorities from wildlife restoration and preservation to resource extraction and wildfire management. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, building new roads through public forests aligns with President Trump’s executive orders to ramp up timber production and mining to “unleash American energy.” In response to a High Country News request for comment, a USDA spokesperson called the roadless rule “outdated and overly prescriptive,” and cited the need for more roads to improve access for firefighting and fuels treatment. Environmental advocates nationwide have decried the proposed rescission. “Rescinding the roadless rule opens the door to logging and development in some of the most ecologically important public forests we have,” William Ripple, an ecologist at Oregon State University, wrote in an email. “These



The Carr Fire burned in Shasta and Trinity counties, California, in 2018. The official cause of the fire was a mechanical failure of a vehicle. Photo: Eric Coulter/BLM

areas are biodiversity strongholds and carbon sinks that play a vital role in climate resilience.” Research also challenges the notion that more roads means fewer and less intense wildland fires. Roads actually increase fire risk, with over 90% of all wildfires occurring within half a mile of a track. Contrary to the USDA’s argument that roads increase access for firefighters, a 2000 report showed that roads actually make little difference once a forest starts to burn. Across the West, wildlife will be the first to feel the impacts of the roadless rule’s removal. Many species are equally, if not more, vulnerable to development than the Canada lynx. For example, both the Alexander Archipelago wolf and the Queen Charlotte goshawk in Alaska’s Tongass National Forest and the great gray owl in Oregon’s Wallowa-Whitman are at-risk species that have a limited range. These forest dwellers are exquisitely adapted to the unique conditions of their homes for hunting or nesting — but that means their survival is yoked to that of the landscape. Lacking federal Endangered Species Act protections, these creatures must rely on the roadless rule as their main line of defense. Perhaps the wildlife most vulnerable to roads is the grizzly bear. Grizzlies will often go out of their way — by as much as two and a half miles — to avoid a



paved road. Roads inevitably hasten human-bear encounters, and conflict with humans is the main cause of grizzly bear deaths. Researchers estimate that ideal grizzly habitat should have less than one-third of a mile of pavement per square mile of forest.

In the 50 years since the passage of the Endangered Species Act, grizzly bear numbers have doubled to 2,000. Studies credit their rebound partly to the roadless nature of their key recovery areas: The rule protects a quarter of their territory in the Northern Rockies. At a time when Congress is weighing delisting grizzlies from the Endangered Species Act, the roadless rule would be critical for their survival.

Building more roads could affect wildlife in a variety of ways. Currently, the lack of roads helps keep recreation levels manageably low. Studies have shown that too many tourists, a frequent consequence of increased road access, can agitate the resident fauna and upset their natural routines. Mule deer, elk and pronghorn all skedaddle when humans approach, even from hundreds of feet away. One study found that bald eagles in Alaska slept less and fed their chicks less as well when humans camped nearby. Instead, the birds spent more time guarding their nests.



A grizzly bear at the confluence of the Russian River and Kenai River in Chugach National Forest, Alaska.  
Photo: U.S. Forest Service

To formally repeal the roadless rule, the USDA will need to solicit public opinion and conduct an environmental impact assessment — a process that can take up to several years. When the roadless rule proposal was first introduced in 2000, it received 1.6 million public comments, the highest for any rule in history, with over 90% of them in favor of it.

The rule has weathered many previous attempts to dismantle it. After President Bill Clinton signed it into law in January 2001, Wyoming and Idaho sued, and the George W. Bush administration later tried to replace it. The rule survived one final major assault in 2012, when the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals and U.S. Supreme Court rejected state requests challenging its legality.

After that, many policy experts regarded that chapter as largely closed. “But here we are,” said Timothy Preso, a managing attorney at the environmental nonprofit Earthjustice, who has worked on lawsuits involving the rule since 2000. “It feels like an unnecessary renewal of a controversy that had achieved some degree of finality.”

Nearly half of Forest Service lands have already opened their doors to mining and logging. Inventoried roadless areas make up 30% of forests and less than 2% of the continental U.S. land base. “It doesn’t seem like a huge ask to say, ‘Let’s leave some of these areas roadless,’ because we have roaded so much,” Preso said. Whatever happens with the roadless rule, it’s only the beginning for the Canada lynx in the Kettle Range. “Having the kittens is the first step,” Piccinini said. “Getting those kittens to survive is the next.”

# The Falkland Islands Wolf: The Tragic Tale Of The First Known Canid Humans Drove To Extinction

*These wolves appeared curious and tame – and humans took advantage.*

Holly Large | IFL Science | July 29, 2025



A Falkland Islands wolf specimen on display at Otago Museum. The scientific name displayed underneath it is no longer in use.

If people were to know anything about the animals of the Falkland Islands, it’d be likely to be the fact that there are a lot of sheep – but there never used to be. Before the arrival of European settlers in the late 1700s, there was only one land mammal native to these isles. Only a little over 100 years later, it was gone.

The mammal in question is the Falkland Islands wolf (*Dusicyon australis*), the first canid known to have been driven to extinction by humans.

It was a curious creature, with a mixture of wolf and fox-like traits; it was about the same size as a large fox, with short legs and a bushy tail ending in a distinctive white tip. Charles Darwin, who rocked up at the Falkland Islands in 1833 on HMS Beagle, seems to have been thoroughly baffled by the canid, and how on Earth it had got there.

“As far as I am aware, there is no other instance in any part of the world, of so small a mass of broken land, distant from a continent, possessing so large a quadruped peculiar to itself,” he wrote in 1834.

It was only in the 21st century that we began to get a much clearer picture of where the Falkland Islands wolf had come from. While some previous research had proposed that an ancestor of the wolf had made its way from South America to the islands via some sort of sea bridge, more recent studies have dismissed that idea. Instead, some scientists have suggested that, contrary to popular belief, there were settlers on the islands before the Europeans arrived, and that they brought the canid with them.

But long before we could figure out where exactly the wolf came from, we’d already managed to make it disappear. Darwin had even predicted this would be the case in his earlier journals.

“Their numbers have rapidly decreased [...] Within a very few years after these islands shall have become regularly settled, in all probability this fox will be classed with the dodo, as an animal which has perished from the face of the earth,” he wrote.

Depending on how many you view “a very few” to be, Darwin wasn’t far wrong – the Falkland Islands wolf went extinct in the wild in 1876.

This was primarily due to hunting. Accounts had described the wolves as being tame and curious, something that made it easier for them to be culled, particularly by fur traders and island settlers who viewed the animals as a threat to their sheep.

While some wolves had been transported to London Zoo prior to this point, they later died, and there’s no report that they ever successfully reproduced while in captivity. The Falkland Islands wolf was gone, forever.

It’s just one of at least 680 species estimated to have been driven to extinction by humans since the 16th century, with entire branches of the tree of life having been wiped out. The actual number could be even greater, with some even suggesting that human action is driving a sixth mass extinction.





# Yellowstone's aspen trees are growing again thanks to the reintroduction of wolves

Eric Ralis | Earth.com | August 14, 2025

Young aspen trees in Yellowstone are doing something they have not done in almost 100 years. Rather than sprouting and being eaten back to nubs by elk and bison, they're actually growing into tall, adult forest trees rising up towards the canopy.

This matters more than it might seem, because it shows what happens when a missing piece of an ecosystem returns.

## Yellowstone, aspens, and elk

In the 1920s, people eliminated wolves in Yellowstone. At the time, with limited scientific knowledge, managers believed it was the right thing to do.

Without wolves, elk herds grew very large. Elk love to eat aspen shoots – the tender young growth is highly palatable to them.

For roughly 70 years, elk browsed aspen sprouts down to stub height, and the trees couldn't grow.

If you had walked through Yellowstone in the 1980s, you would have seen many tiny aspen shoots covering the ground, but almost no young trees gaining height.

The forest's regeneration was stalled. Old trees died, and no new ones replaced them.

In 1995 and 1996, park managers reintroduced wolves into the Yellowstone Park ecosystem. Scientists hoped and wondered whether this would change anything for the trees.

## Why aspen matter to Yellowstone

Aspen groves provide habitat for many species. Birds nest in them. Beavers eat the bark and use the wood for dams. Butterflies and moths lay eggs on the leaves.

Their canopy admits enough light for wildflowers and shrubs to grow beneath. When it rains, aspen groves hold water in the soil better than some other forest types.

In short, when aspen return, dozens of other species benefit. More trees support more insects, which in turn support more birds, enriching the ecosystem.

## Checking the trees three decades later

Luke Painter, an ecologist at Oregon State University, sought clear answers. His team returned to 87 aspen stands across Yellowstone that scientists had previously surveyed.

They measured thousands of young trees, looked

for bite marks, and counted how many stems were tall enough that elk could no longer reach the tips.

About a third of these stands now have many tall young aspens pushing toward the canopy.

"About 26 of the 87 aspen stands we examined had large numbers of tall saplings throughout, a remarkable change from the 1990s when surveys found none at all," Painter said.

## Why wolves matter to Yellowstone aspens

Breaking it all down, the conclusions of this study are pretty simple.

Wolves hunt elk. When wolves came back, two things happened. First, elk numbers declined from unusually high levels. Second, elk changed their behavior. They spent less time in the same areas feeding.

With fewer elk and shorter feeding bouts, more aspen shoots survived long enough to exceed the browsing zone – about six to seven feet high.

Once a sapling reaches that height, elk cannot easily reach the growing tip. The tree continues to grow.

"The reintroduction of large carnivores has initiated a recovery process that had been shut down for decades," Painter explained.

Scientists call this a trophic cascade – when adding or removing one species causes changes that ripple through the whole system.

## Some places recover, others don't

Unfortunately, not every aspen stand has recovered yet. Some valleys still have many short, heavily browsed shoots, because it's not only elk eating them anymore.

Bison herds have grown, and bison browse on aspen as well. They are strong enough to break young trees.

"Increasing numbers of bison may be emerging as a new constraint to aspen in some areas," Painter confirmed.

Additionally, winter snow depth varies; droughts stress trees; bears and mountain lions also hunt elk; and hunting outside the park influences elk distribution.

All of these factors interact, which is why some sites show

strong recovery, others show moderate recovery, and a few have changed very little.

The key pattern is that places with many tall saplings experience little browsing, and aspen groves that remain popular eating grounds today stay short.

This fact is the strongest indication that tree recovery is linked directly to wolf presence, not solely to weather or soil conditions.

## Proof in the measurements

Painter's team did not rely on casual observation. They used the same methods as earlier researchers, measuring the same plots.

They counted recruitment – when young trees surpass browsing height and begin progressing toward maturity. This measure is crucial. Sprouts are insufficient if they never grow; without recruitment, the forest cannot replace itself.

The results are robust. After being stalled for most of a century, Yellowstone's aspens are increasing in height. In recovering stands today, you will see saplings – six, eight, or ten feet tall – that were not present in the 1990s.

## The future of Yellowstone's aspens

"This is a remarkable case of ecological restoration," Painter concluded. "Wolf reintroduction is yielding long-term ecological changes contributing to increased biodiversity and habitat diversity."

Trees grow slowly, so even with wolves restored, it will take decades for these young aspens to form a full-grown forest.

Some areas might never fully recover if bison numbers continue to rise or if the climate becomes too hot and dry.

Thanks to the work of Painter and his team, scientists are now certain that restoring the Yellowstone predator has restarted aspen forest regeneration. Not everywhere and not perfectly, but enough to be measured, creating hope for the future.

The full study was published in the journal Forest Ecology and Management.

CWWC is looking for winter interns & volunteers!

✉ Contact: [Kelly@wolfeducation.org](mailto:Kelly@wolfeducation.org)







Photo: B. Bartel, USFWS

## Center for Biological Diversity sues feds over red wolf listing

Catherine Kozak | CoastalReview.org | July 29, 2025

RALEIGH – Nearly 40 years after the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service launched an innovative program to save the eastern red wolf from extinction, a nonprofit conservation group is challenging the agency’s prior decision to not upgrade to a more protective management designation, despite its outsized importance to the species’ survival.

Arguments were heard Wednesday by U.S. District Court Judge Terrence Boyle for the Eastern District of North Carolina in a federal court case filed by the Center for Biological Diversity that contends the Wildlife Service acted unlawfully when it decided to continue classifying the critically endangered population of red wolves as “nonessential.”

“Judge Boyle is so engaged on this issue ... that he’s really able to dig in at this extremely deep, detail-oriented level,” said Perrin de Jong, a senior attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity, during an interview Thursday about the 90-minute hearing.

Following listing the wolves in 1966 as “threatened with extinction” on what later became the Endangered Species Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service about 20 years later established an experimental “non-essential” population of wild red wolves. and released four pairs into Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in

northeastern North Carolina.

It is the only known wild population of red wolves in the world.

The intensively managed recovery program had promising success until about 2010, when management was scaled back. That was before court actions restored much of the program.

The Center for Biological Diversity had petitioned the agency in 2016 to reclassify the red wolf population as essential. The petition was denied in January 2023.

“The service is violating its duty to consider the best available science and the facts that have taken place since 1986 that affect the survival of the red wolf in the wild,” de Jong told Coastal Review.

In a request for comment on the case, a spokesperson for the U.S. Interior Department responded in an email Thursday that the agency does not “provide comment on active litigation.”

Mortality by vehicle strikes and gunshots have been an increasing challenge to the wolves’ survival, de Jong said.

Changing the classification to “essential” would extend more protective measures for the animals, he said, including allowing another layer of protection with a

critical habitat designation.

The conservation group also is asking the agency to change their enforcement code to match a 2018 court ruling by Boyle that banned property owners from shooting red wolves unless they were threatening animals or people.

“The science indicates that the greater protections will result in greater conservation success, and inversely, lower protections result in higher poaching pressure,” he said.

The Wildlife Service is not disputing the conservation group’s argument that the agency has the authority to change the essentiality determination, the legal term for the classification, he added.

“You could describe it as, ‘We’re not going to revisit the essentiality determination, because we don’t have to.’”

Today, there are believed to be 18 known red wolves surviving in the program’s five-county recovery area, in addition to unconfirmed numbers of wolves and wolf pups that do not have collars and have been born or fostered in the wild this year.

Updated data on the Red Wolf Recovery Program was not available on the Fish and Wildlife Service website, but a spokesperson said the new data is expected to be posted in early August.



## From Parrots to Ferrets – THEIR NEW OUTDOOR PEN

Casey project donates a large dog crate, treats, and spay and neuter money this month to the Costa Rica project.





# Mexican gray wolf released in New Mexico after years of captivity

Bianca Hoops | KRQE | August 8, 2025



NEW MEXICO (KRQE) – After more than two years in captivity, a New Mexico wolf is now back in the wild. Asha the Mexican grey wolf has been at the center of a long running controversy. Asha attracted attention across the country, she is even the star of a book. In 2023, Asha made headlines for wandering beyond a Mexican wolf boundary set by the U.S. government to protect her endangered species. “We’ve been happy to advocate for a young female wolf following her instincts,” said Chris Smith Wildlife Program Director, WildEarth Guardians. “Especially the fact that her journeys have taken her into northern New Mexico, where wolves used to roam and I hope will roam again.” The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service captured Asha and kept her in captivity. Their reasoning was to keep her with her kind. But they faced back lash from animal advocacy groups who argued she should be allowed to live freely and follow her wild instincts. “They’re a critically imperiled species. They’re iconic here in New Mexico. That’s where UNM gets its mascot, the lobos, and they play a critical ecosystem role,” said Smith.

For years, groups have demanded for her release. The pressure increased after she gave birth to five pups in June. “My hope is that her pups reach, you know, a mature age and find mates and start new packs and so, her really valuable genetic material and her mate’s genetic material are dispersed throughout that population.” The U.S. Fish and Wildlife service confirmed her pups and her mate, Arcadia were released August 6. Ranchers have raised concerns about wolves threatening their livestock, but federal wildlife officials said they will step in to help if conflicts arise. Groups like WildEarth Guardians argue that research shows wolves are not a major cause of livestock losses. “We should be sympathetic, but wolves are not the huge impact to the livestock industry that they want you to believe.” Wildlife Guardians said Asha’s release was pushed along by a letter demanding it from more 8,000 citizens and 36 conservation organizations.

## MEXICAN FIESTA FUNDRAISER

# HELP US EXPAND OUR NEW HOME!

Saturday, Sept 13th  
4-6PM



- Feeding Tour
- Meet & Greet
- Seasonal Treats
- Refreshments & Adult Beverages
- Vegetarian & Meat Chili
- And other festivities!

What better way to enrich their lives than to give more space to be wolves? Thank you for contributing to this project!

RESERVE TODAY 719-687-9742



# HOWLOWEEN



**SUNDAY  
OCTOBER 26TH  
4-6pm**

**JOIN US AS WE  
PASS OUT  
MEAT FILLED  
PUMPKINS  
TO ALL  
THE WOLVES!**

**+ ENJOY A  
BON FIRE AND  
REFRESHMENTS.**

**\$40 ages 12+  
\$20 ages 6-11**

**COLORADO WOLF AND WILDLIFE CENTER**

**Reservations Required · 719.687.9742 · [wolfeducation.org](http://wolfeducation.org)**



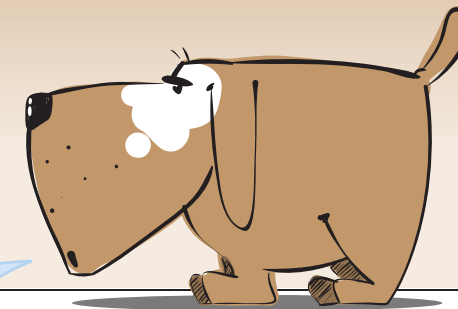
# Adoption corner

## TCRAS

Teller County Regional Animal Shelter  
tcrascolorado.org · 719.686.7707

## SLVAWS

San Luis Valley Animal Welfare Society  
slvaws.org · 719.587.woof (9663)



**[ NOTE - Our shelter is still open for adoptions, but we are asking that you call ahead and make an appointment before coming in to the shelter - 719-686-7707. ]**

### TURNER »

I have been at the shelter for a while now, and I am eager to get into a home.

I am searching for a home that is calm and quiet. I really do enjoy being around people, but it takes me a little bit to feel comfortable in a new place.

I would also love a home that will pay close attention to my needs and ensure I have a good, trustworthy vet, as I have some special medical needs that my family will need to monitor.



### « PAT

My name's Pat and I'm a young, friendly guy looking for a home to call my own! I'm tall and lanky, and I love to run around (especially with a toy) and play and be with my people. I still have a lot to learn in the way of manners, but I like learning and I'm very smart! I think cats are SUPER interesting...I should probably have a slow introduction to any cats in a home. Will you be my new family and teach me how to be the best boy?



**SLVAWS**  
Please check our website,  
[www.slvaws.org](http://www.slvaws.org) for our next  
adoption fair in Colorado Springs,  
every Saturday 10am-3pm.

### SPRINKLES & SUGAR

Sprinkles and her sister Sugar, 1 year old stray moms who came in pregnant with 17 puppies together. Their puppies have found homes and they now are ready to get attention and love for themselves. Spayed, all vacc's, chipped. Wheaten Terrier/labradoodle mix?

