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APRIL 2024 · CONSERVATION · EDUCATION · PRESERVATION

NOT THE
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THE "FOX
WALK"!





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Cover Page: Kirk and Emilee walking Zak our Silver fox. This was the first time to walk a fox. Zak came to us as a rescue in 2021. He lived in a trailer house and never had an outdoor enclosure. Thanks to Emilee and her dedicated training, Zak will now be able to go on walks around the center and have the best enrichment ever. We are hoping that now Zak can walk with a halter and leash, we may be able to train his girlfriend Zoe. That would be an awesome experience for the two.

| SOCIAL MEDIA HAPPENINGS |

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Follow us on Instagram: @cowolfcenter to see pictures of our beautiful animals, stories of what we are doing around the center, and ways you can help wild wolf populations.. Keep your eye on our story for fun videos of the day to day lives of our wolves and keepers.



Follow us on Twitter: @Wolves_at_CWWC to see photos of our animals, read fun facts, and hear about events happening at CWWC.



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

YES, IT’S LEGAL TO RUN DOWN WOLVES AND COYOTES WITH SNOWMOBILES IN WYOMING

Incident In Sublette County Casts Spotlight On State’s Codified Hostility Toward Predators

Todd Wilkinson | yellowstonian.org | April 15, 2024



Right now Wyoming finds itself on trial in the court of international public opinion. If the chatter circulating prolifically on social media is any indication, the state is losing an argument it is trying to make, which is that it hovers as a beacon of modern wildlife management.

Indeed a bright beam of scrutiny has befallen it, in light of a recent incident involving a Wyoming man who allegedly ran over a young wild wolf with his snowmobile and then brought the injured animal to a bar before killing it.

The last time public furor of this magnitude has been directed toward the state was in 1998 when Matthew Shepard, a gay student at the University of Wyoming was beaten, tortured and left to die outside the college town of Laramie. His murder shocked the country and it set off a debate about whether it was really the result of a hate crime or a robbery unrelated to Shepard’s gender affiliation—and whether Wyoming laws were sufficient to punish those may who committed the former.

Inarguable is Wyoming’s collective identity as a state that proudly counts itself among the most conservative in the country. Manifestations of that include denial of climate change and its connection to fossil fuels, efforts to have books banned in public schools, and hostility continuously vented toward the federal government and environmentalists. Another example of just how far to the right the culture continues to veer is the 2022 primary defeat of incumbent Congresswoman Liz Cheney, daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney who was once widely popular, by insurgent candidate Harriet Hageman.

Wyoming has, for many years, deflected criticism brought by wildlife advocates who say the state fosters a culture of overt hatred toward wolves, coyotes and other native species dating back to before its founding in 1890.

Villainized as adversaries to ranchers and treated as unwanted competitors to big game hunters, wolves are also portrayed in some corners of the Equality State as being imminent threats to people. Today, it’s allowable to kill wolves and coyotes in more than four fifths of Wyoming using almost any means. It’s literally open season, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, no questions asked and apparently no explanation expected.

Nowhere else in modern American wildlife management has a native wildlife species, brought back from the brink and commanding strong favorable impressions with the public been treated with such open disdain that also, its critics say, is reflected in public policy.

So that readers understand in blunt terms what the above means, wolves and coyotes can be killed in most of the state in unlimited number without their pursuers even having to secure a hunting license. They can be trapped, shot, snared, baited into gunning range, poisoned, chased with hounds and motorized vehicles, and shot from airplanes enlisted by authorized government personnel.

It’s legal, too, thanks to their special almost-everything-goes “predator” classification invented by the legislature, to pour gasoline into a wolf or coyote den, with pups inside, and then light them afire. To protect individuals who kill wolves, legislators passed a code that keeps their identities secret in

order to shield them from receiving any potential harassment. Seldom, until recently, have state leaders had to answer for Wyoming’s controversial anti-predator policies, laws and attitudes. They exist not only as tools of eradication but as an expression, observers say, declaring that Wyoming still resents federally-induced wolf and grizzly recovery that politicians have said was done against the will of the state.

Wolf conservationists, meanwhile, point to the irony of that mindset and note that nearly all of the negative contentions—that wolves, in particular, cause huge economic losses to ranchers, that they decimate big game herds, that they represent a menace to human safety and are the spawn of the devil—are refuted by confirmable facts.

Wildlife tourism in the northwest corner of Wyoming, which encompasses Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks, ranks among the state’s most reliable economic engines. It annually nets billions of dollars in spending from nature-loving visitors who excitedly flock to the state from across the globe. According to ongoing analyses from the National Park Service, those two crown jewel national parks alone are magnets that generate upwards of \$1.5 billion annually in economic activity and along with it, create 15,000 jobs.

Notably, two of the top three attractions to Yellowstone, one park visitor survey found, are wolf and grizzly bear watching. In Jackson Hole, the fascination with Grizzly 399 and successions of her cubs over the last two decades has been a catalyst for generating more nature-tourism dollars in a single year than Wyoming has spent on grizzly recovery, in toto, (around \$60 million) since the Greater Yellowstone population of grizzlies was given federal protection in 1975. This demonstrates how live grizzlies are a bullish asset that, like protected public lands, only accrue more value over time.

But for the presence of Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks, and their existing as wildlife preserves and hooks for conservation, it’s possible that grizzlies would have disappeared from Wyoming during the 20th century as they did in Colorado. Many believe it’s doubtful wolves would exist.

All of this provides essential backdrop/context for pondering what has become one of the most notorious wolf-killing incidents in modern times.

So much for the frightening fairy tale depictions of a big bad wolf that must be subdued. In a video obtained by Cowboy State Daily, Roberts is seen offering the wolf a mock display of affection not long, apparently, before he killed it. “The shocking video appears to show Roberts holding the injured wolf and then bringing its head up to his lips and then kissing it,” reporters Jimmy Orr and Greg Johnson of Cowboy State Daily write. “The wolf bears its teeth some, but appears too weak to react. A woman in the background is heard laughing during the entirety of the clip. The source who supplied the video to Cowboy State Daily, who prefers to remain anonymous, said the video was shot in the Green River Bar.”

A short report, based on an interview carried out with Roberts by two Wyoming Game and Fish wardens, states that Roberts admitted capturing the wolf, bringing it to the bar and killing it, but the partially redacted document, which the state only released after coming under public pressure, does not

mention Roberts running the animal down with a snowmobile.

Cat Urbigkit, a writer, book author, and correspondent for the Wyoming Livestock Roundup, penned a piece asserting that facts of the case depart from what has been alleged. She claimed reports that Roberts drove over the wolf with his snowmobile are, so far, unsubstantiated.

In particular Urbigkit took aim at animal rights activists. She suggests that rhetoric circulated by some of them on social media inflamed the public and brought an onslaught of death threats directed at Roberts, his family, employees of Wyoming Game and Fish and owners of the bar. She writes: “Much of the rhetoric against Roberts resembles what researchers call dehumanization, in which people are singled out and treated as less than human and outside the scope of human morality and justice, so any harm which befalls them is therefore morally justified.”

It should be noted that Urbigkit, who owns a sheep ranch in western Wyoming near Pinedale, had been a vocal opponent of Yellowstone wolf reintroduction to begin with, and she and her husband, Jim, joined in a lawsuit to halt reintroduction from happening. Had they prevailed, wolf recovery might never have occurred. Many of Urbigkit’s depictions of wolves have been debunked by facts. In response to her missive in the Roundup, one wildlife advocate pointed to the irony of Urbigkit’s op-ed insinuating Roberts is some kind of victim, being de-humanized as he stands accused of engaging in inhumane undignified behavior that otherwise would be deemed criminal if a person had done the same thing to a sheep in her flock.They say rural Wyomingites over the years have been guilty of singling out wolves and treating them as less than human outside the scope of human mortality and justice.

Many conservationists have characterized the Roberts incident as a case of barbaric depravity. Mr. Roberts, to date, has not been charged with any crime involving animal cruelty because of loopholes that Wyoming officials have invoked pertaining to wolves. He did, however, pay a fine of \$250, not for killing the wolf but for illegally possessing a warm-blooded animal. Petitions floating around on the internet have collected tens of thousands of digital signees demanding that tougher charges be brought against Roberts, but what would those be?



A video released by the Wyoming Game & Fish Department following a Freedom of Information Act request from conservationists. It shows the young, wild wolf that Cody Roberts captured and brought to a bar before killing it. Prominent wolf biologist Doug Smith said, after viewing the footage, that it appeared the wolf was traumatized and suffering from pain. Smith had observed hundreds of wolves during his tenure as chief wolf biologist in Yellowstone National Park.

Emily Cohen, executive director of public radio station KHOL in

Jackson Hole, deserves praise. She first reported on the story and, if she hadn’t, it might never have come to light. Only after news of the event surfaced weeks after the fact and then spread like wildfire via social media internationally did public officials in Wyoming respond with what some describe as confusing statements of condemnation. The first came from a spokesperson with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department who initially, glibly, described the incident as involving an unidentified person “harvesting” a wolf and then “euthanizing” it.

Here, a couple of salient points are worth noting that figure prominently in the narrative Wyoming has tried to spin. First, “harvesting” an animal is what hunters do, so the implication from Game and Fish is that Roberts was hunting the wolf.

Secondly, in the dictionary the word euthanize means putting a living thing to death humanely. Both law enforcement personnel and the Sublette County attorney have acknowledged that what happened in this case seems to fall well outside the bounds of that.

In the state of Wyoming, wolves and coyotes are not, by careful parsing of words, covered by statutes that criminalize their torture. Weeks after the Roberts incident, Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon issued this statement on his Facebook page: “Our office has received considerable communication about the actions of an individual involving a wolf that occurred earlier this winter in Sublette County. I want to make my position on this absolutely clear. Cruelty to any wildlife is absolutely unacceptable. This is not the way anyone should treat any animal. I am outraged by this incident, just like thousands of Wyoming ranchers, farmers, sportsmen and sportswomen, and others around the state. I would be disappointed if anyone were to paint Wyoming with a broad brush and suggest that Wyoming citizens condone the reckless, thoughtless and heinous actions of one individual.”

Gordon’s statement, wildlife advocates contend, is filled with dodgy contradiction. Objectively, based on earlier interviews I did, the Roberts case is not a standalone isolated incident of “reckless, thoughtless and heinous actions of one individual.” Despite the governor’s characterization, running down wild wolves and coyotes with snowmobiles until they drop from exhaustion is and has been an accepted pastime for years. Wyoming Game and Fish officials under the command of a few different governors have known about it. How do I know this? Because I asked them to comment six years go.

In December 2018, this writer penned a lengthy investigative report about the “sport” of “snowmachining predators” and “coyote whacking” in Wyoming after home-made videos by self-described “hunters” from Sublette County were posted on YouTube. I had known about the controversial activity for years but needed visual evidence instead of relying on hearsay which could be denied. Thanks to cell phones used by participants seeking their moments of fame, evidence surfaced.

Boasting of their feats and setting the footage to Country-Western music, they recorded themselves giving chase and literally crushing coyotes with their sleds. My story appeared in Mountain Journal, a news organization I co-founded and left in August 2023. You can read an updated, shortened version of that piece, which generated hundreds of thousands of reads within days of it being published, here at Yellowstonian.

John Fandek who for four decades managed a well-known cattle ranch in Cora, Wyoming along the flanks of the Wind River Mountains near Pinedale and Daniel, was not surprised when my story appeared. Far from being rare, as Gov. Gordon recently claimed, Fandek noted this to me more than half a decade ago: “It is very common for people to take their entire families out on snowmobiles and train their kids to run down coyotes. To them, it’s considered just a normal activity,” he said. “There’s no question they do it with wolves too if they can. If they can’t run them down, they’ll chase them until they fall in the snow from exhaustion and then shoot them. It’s considered a fun wholesome weekend activity.”

At the website, Hunt Talk, preying upon coyotes with snowmobiles has been a topic of conversation—and debate—for more than 20 years. Here’s a story that appeared in an Idaho newspaper in 1999.

...

It was not produced in the Northern Rockies. We are sharing it because it offers a burial glimpse at the reality, it speaks not only to truth on the ground, but to the fact such behavior is condoned by political and social leaders in Wyoming and other states, who let them happen without comment. If you choose not to view it, then here is a description: A snowmobile spots a coyote and throttles the engine at high speed. The machine strikes the coyote and the driver makes a u-turn to come back and run over the mortally wounded coyote again. It is similar to the one made by the Wyoming snowmobile riders and which I shared with my story before it was taken down by youtube.

Fandek is a hunter and for years was enlisted by the state to oversee one of its elk feedgrounds. In 2018, after interviewing him and others about the prevalence of coyote whacking, I contacted Brian Nesvik who was then chief of Wyoming Game and Fish’s Wildlife Division prior to being named agency director by Gov. Gordon in 2019.

Nesvik initially said he was unaware of any such incidents and then, after I presented him with video footage that had been posted on youtube, he personally characterized the pastime simply as being “regrettable.” Careful with his choice of words, he noted that the department did not want to stake out an official position on whether it believed running over animals with snowmobiles was deemed unethical. Nesvik was in a tough spot. Were he to say anything critical it would likely attract the wrath of others in government and the all-powerful livestock industry.

Nesvik said Wyoming Game and Fish is able to only enforce laws that are passed by the legislature, signed by the governor and then implemented by the Game and Fish Commission. He didn’t tell me this, but he didn’t have to: wolves being classified as “predators” had been the doing of the state Department of Livestock, which had a strong role in getting wolves demoted from full-blown wildlife status.

During the 1990s, the Wyoming Farm Bureau and Wyoming Stock Growers Association, which have commanded huge sway in the writing of Wyoming statutes, fought wolf reintroduction and insisted upon the predator classification. Prior to becoming governor, Gordon ran a cow-calf operation at his ranch near Buffalo, located in northeast Wyoming, a part of the state where wolves are classified as predators.

When he declared that he believes “cruelty to any wildlife is absolutely unacceptable” and “this is not the way anyone should treat any animal,” it is unclear what he means. Is it cruel for wolves and coyotes to be run down with snowmobiles, was it Roberts’ behavior after he allegedly did that that constitutes cruelty, or was Gordon referring to the entire incident? If “cruelty to any wildlife is absolutely unacceptable,” then why are wolves and coyotes in 85 percent of his state classified as “predators” which is code for being viewed as unwanted vermin and not wildlife?

Moreover, and this is what Nesvik told me, Wyoming Game and Fish, because of Wyoming’s convoluted way it classifies native species, have limited authority over wolf and coyote management. Where all other US states treat wolves as wildlife, Wyoming intentionally has concocted a system in which the very people enlisted to professionally manage wildlife, on behalf of citizens, not only possess little legal authority over wolves in most of the state, but they use it to look the other way when incidents like this happen.

Equally telling is that the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the federal agency that oversees management of imperiled species when they are protected under the Endangered Species Act, approved Wyoming’s controversial policies. The Fish and Wildlife Service had to sign off on the state’s plan to deal with wolves before they were delisted. Given the national outrage that erupted with the Roberts’ incident, it’s why millions of conservation citizens who regard wolves and grizzly bears as a treasured part of America’s wildlife heritage are deeply concerned about politically-driven proposals to delist Greater Yellowstone grizzlies. If that happens, grizzly management will be turned over to the states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho. One of the major motivations is removing federal protection so that grizzlies can again be sport hunted for the first time since 1974.

If Wyoming’s hostility toward delisted wolves is a prelude to the kind of management awaiting grizzlies, then can the state be trusted to continue building on bear recovery, or will it set gains into reverse?

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is touted by hunters as a cornerstone of professional wildlife management in the US. The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies is recognized as an organization that promotes the highest standards of ethics guiding state wildlife management and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is a proud member. At the association’s 100th anniversary celebration held at Big Sky, Montana in September 2002, its members formally endorsed the tenets of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, one of which is: “Wildlife may only be killed for a legitimate, non-frivolous purpose.”

Lisa Robertson, a longtime Jackson Hole conservationist, founded the non-profit organization Wyoming Untrapped that has vociferously called for trapping reform. She also brought the issue of snowmobilers running down wildlife to the Game and Fish Commission in 2019 shortly after I spoke with Nesvik. Appointees of earlier commissions, who often have been outfitters, guides, ranchers or big game hunters have consistently rebuffed calls for change. Wyoming Untrapped and a coalition of other wildlife conservation organizations have also been highly critical of Wyoming allowing controversial private wildlife killing contests on public and private land that award prizes to contestants who shoot the most wolves, coyotes and other species based on the



"Ropin' A Wolf," a painting completed by famed American artist Charles M. Russell in 1901 portraying a cowboy chasing down a wolf on horseback. The work speaks to a less-enlightened time in the West when settlers ran roughshod over nature, destroying wildlife that was viewed as threats to livestock or competitors for grass.

disproved premise it results in better protection for livestock and game animals.

Not long after Gov. Gordon posted his comment on April 7, 2024 about the Roberts incident, Wyoming Game and Fish, which had come under criticism for its earlier portrayal of the wolf being "euthanized," published this statement that quotes Nesvik, using it to justify why Roberts was only subjected to a \$250 fine and blaming lax punishment on the absence of a law forbidding it.

Verbatim, the statement reads:

"The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has received a considerable amount of phone calls, emails and social media messages involving the possession of a live wolf in Sublette County. The department investigated this incident and cited one person.

'The actions and behaviors of the individual involved in this case are not reflective of Wyoming's values for wildlife,' Game and Fish Director Brian Nesvik emphasized. 'The actions that came to light in this case were disrespectful to wildlife. These actions were not in keeping with conservation principles or ethical behavior. This incident casts a shadow over our state's proven track record in successfully and responsibly managing our gray wolf population.'

The individual was cited for a misdemeanor violation of Wyoming Game and Fish Commission regulations, Chapter 10, Importation and Possession of Live Warm-Blooded Wildlife. The department's investigation indicated there were no other statutory or

regulatory violations. The incident occurred in a part of the state where gray wolves are legally classified as predatory animals. Predatory animals are not managed by the department and animal cruelty laws, per Wyo. Stat. Ann. 6-3-1008 (a)(vii) do not apply to predatory animals. The department acknowledges the significant concern and dismay expressed by many people from around the state and nation."

Again, as with Gov. Gordon, the same set of clarifying questions seem warranted, including this: If the head of Wyoming Game and Fish said the Roberts incident was not in keeping with conservation principles or ethical behavior and "the department acknowledges the significant concern and dismay expressed by many people from around the state and nation," why didn't it support putting tougher laws on the books? Why has it not challenged the "predator status" that not only declassifies wolves as wildlife over the state and specifically enables behaviors that violate ethics, fair chase and tenets of the North American Model of Wildlife Management?

While director Nesvik described Roberts' actions as being "disrespectful to wildlife"—wolves are given full wildlife status in the northwest corner of the state, encompassing around fifteen percent of Wyoming. There they are classified as "trophy game animals" and aggressively hunted outside the national parks. Wolves are not classified as wildlife where the wolf in Sublette County was killed. Roberts was not charged with cruelty to animals because the way the laws read wolves are not entitled to being treated with humaneness.

By comparison, anti-cruelty provisions are extended to all big game species, plus livestock, horses, and household pets. In the case of deer, elk, moose, pronghorn, cows, sheep, and horses, it is also illegal for domestic dogs to harass those animals and pets can be killed if they're caught in the act of harassing wildlife. (Mountain lions can be chased by aggressive dogs). In 85 percent of Wyoming, wolves are bestowed with no more protection than exotic rats.

Kristin Combs, executive director of Jackson Hole-based Wyoming Wildlife Advocates, claims the arguments flowing from Wyoming officials are part of an ongoing attempt to evade accountability. In recent days, Gov. Gordon has made efforts to create an informal review panel to assess possible lessons learned from the Roberts' incident but he has not extended an invitation to citizens and conservationists who have criticized his handling of it.

"It took a long while for officials of state government to come out and condemn this and their silence was their complicity," Combs said. "When there are things happening that are this egregious, it doesn't matter what the animal is, at some point you've got to draw the line and not accept that this is how we do things in Wyoming. For too many years predators have been demoted into a subclass of wildlife. Yes, there are a lot of other states that still allow for predator control if needed, but still hold people accountable for acts of torture, torment and cruelty. As a 21st century society, we've said that's just not okay."

Combs says the incident has provided a jarring wake-up call for the rest of the country among people who were unaware of the flagrant hostility that's being directed at wolves in Wyoming and the rest of the Northern Rockies.

Wyoming, "believing it was being clever," deliberately created its

own paradox of classification with wolves and now it's ensnared in a problem of its own making, says Carter Niemeyer who spent decades on the front lines of predator control campaigns in the West. Niemeyer made his living working for both federal and state governments in trying to solve livestock-predator conflicts and he admits on many occasions predators were lethally removed but he also says claims of predator impacts on livestock and game animals have been grossly exaggerated, something often not explored by the media.

What Wyoming officials describe as "our state's proven track record in successfully and responsibly managing our gray wolf population" is actually controverted by this reality: Never

in the 51-year history of the federal Endangered Species Act has a species that's been deemed biologically recovered been immediately, upon its delisting, subjected to an overt state-driven campaign to re-annihilate it and keep its numbers at the lowest levels it can but still prevent re-listing.

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TO CONTINUE READING](#)

Demand Felony Charges Against Cody Roberts for Animal Cruelty



As a deeply concerned citizen and an advocate for animal rights, I am appalled by the horrific act of cruelty inflicted upon a wolf by Cody Roberts of Daniel, Wyoming. Animals have just as much right to feel safe and be spared any unnecessary pain. If it was a person being tortured, the man would be in jail immediately.

This petition calls upon Sublette County Attorney Clayton Melinkovich and Sublette County Sheriff K.C. Lehr to bring felony charges against Cody Roberts for the torture, abuse, and murder of this innocent creature. This is not only about justice for one wolf but also about sending a clear message that animal cruelty will not be tolerated.

Animal abuse is a serious issue that often goes unpunished. According to The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), nearly 1 million animals are abused or killed each year due to some form of human violence. It's time we take these statistics seriously and ensure those responsible face appropriate legal consequences.

We urge you to use your authority to hold Cody Roberts accountable for his actions under Wyoming Statute 6-3-203 which clearly states that "A person commits cruelty to animals if he knowingly overrides an animal or drives an

animal when overloaded...or unnecessarily or cruelly beats...or tortures an animal."

Please join us in standing up against such heinous acts of violence towards our wildlife by signing this petition today!

[Scan & Share the QR Code, or
Click Here to Sign the Petition](#)





INTRODUCING JAY MALLONEE

My name is Jay Mallonee and I am a wolf research biologist. I have studied wolves for over 30 years, mostly in the wild. Since July 2023, I have been observing and tracking a local wolf pack in the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem in Montana to determine how their presence, activities, and behavior contribute to the health of our environment. So far I have found many of the pack's travel routes, determined the number of individuals in the pack and have them identified, know who the two leaders are and their genders, and understand the basic outline of the pack's territory. Previously, I had conducted similar research with the Fishtrap pack, also in northwest Montana. I studied them for nine years until they were killed by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), the state wildlife management agency. This ended the longest behavioral study of wolves in Montana's history outside of Yellowstone National Park - an example of the ongoing deadly conflict between wolves, wildlife management, and the citizens of the western wolf states.

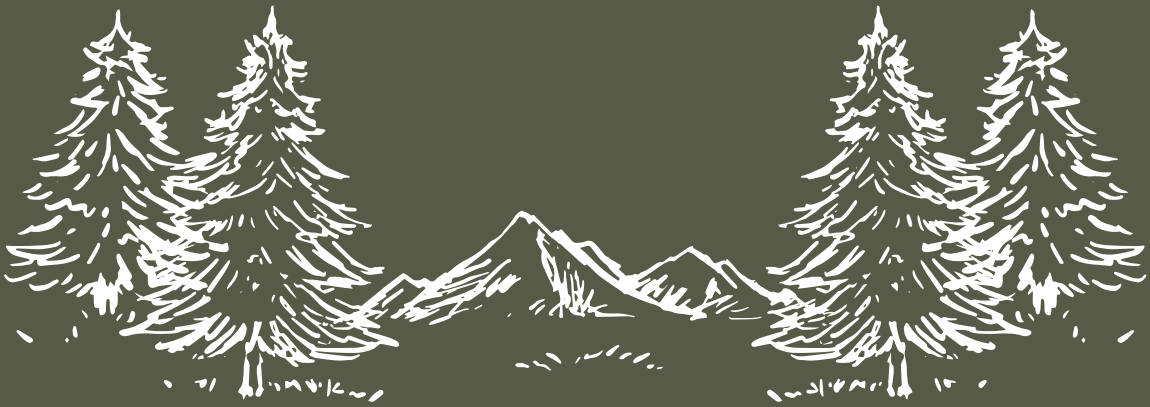
At the beginning of my research career, I studied cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises) for over 20 years. I earned a master's degree in neurobiology/animal behavior and researched bottlenose dolphin intelligence, in addition to projects involving harbor porpoise, Dall's porpoise in the Bering Sea, and orcas. I also spent a number of years studying summering gray whales off the coasts of California and Washington. These experiences lead me to the study of wolves. This began in 1993 with a wild wolf from Montana who suffered from PTSD caused from her aggressive capture by management agencies and subsequent placement into captivity, which perpetuated her symptoms. She had survived being shot (tranquilizers) four times and chased by aircraft twice. This was the beginning of my experience with the violent and political world of wolves.

The topic of wolves, with all its complexities, can bring out the passion in people. This is especially true regarding the two extreme perceptions many people can have: wolves are passionless killing machines or nature's perfect children that can do no wrong. Wolves are neither, which scientists try to document and educate others about. Therefore, the facts are important to know when trying to understand these canids. For example, I published a review of MFWP's wolf population data and found that their numbers were not collected using scientific protocols as they had claimed. Nevertheless, this flawed information is the basis of their wolf management plan that is used to kill hundreds of wolves each year. Consequently, entire family units are destroyed. I have learned that rather than a "thing," a wolf pack is a dynamic process. It is greater than the sum of its parts, which consist of pack members interacting with each other and their surrounding environment. The net result is a force that changes over time as the pack reacts to endless environmental variations, the effects of which are felt throughout the food chain.

If you would like to learn more about wolves, my research, and publications, please visit my website at www.wolfandwildlifestudies.com. Wolves are incredibly fascinating animals, and in cooperation with the Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center, I am looking forward to answering any questions you have about wolves, their place in the environment, and their behavior.

I am pleased to introduce and welcome Jay Mallonee. Jay will be our speaker every month on our social media channels. This will provide a wonderful opportunity for our followers to send in questions that they would like to ask Jay pertaining to the topics he is discussing. These videos will go "live" on our Facebook on the last Thursday of the month at 9am. Viewers can reply with questions in the comments.


- Darlene Kobobel CEO/Founder/President



7 PHD STUDENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO - BOULDER VISIT CWWC!



Graduate seminar class: ENVS 5100 "Canis lupus" | **Professor for the class:** Dr. Joanna Lambert
Two of the students are studying gray wolves.

A photograph of a wolf with brown and grey fur, looking directly at the camera. The wolf is positioned on the right side of the frame, with its head and shoulders visible. The background is a dense forest with green foliage and tree branches, slightly out of focus. The lighting is natural, suggesting daylight.

Breaking: We're going to court to fight for wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains

Kitty Block & Sara Amundson | The Humane Society of the US | April 8, 2024

Photo: Alamy Stock Photo

Today, with our allies, we sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over its decision to not reinstate federal protections for wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains. In 2022, most wolves in the U.S. regained their federal protections under the Endangered Species Act when a federal judge ruled in their favor in response to a lawsuit we filed with other groups—most wolves, but not all. Wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains, including in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, lost federal protections years ago, and the 2022 court decision did not impact their status.

Since losing federal protections, wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains have suffered relentless persecution from trophy hunters, trappers and predator control agents. Conditions for wolves in Idaho and Montana became even worse in 2021 when those states enacted policies aimed at decimating their populations through wolf killings. As public policy, this is nothing less than disastrous. Recent scientific research concludes that the level of genetic variability in U.S. wolves, including in the Northern Rocky Mountains, is already insufficient to prevent long-term extinction risk. Drastic population declines associated with their persecution will exacerbate that harm. Plus, small and fragile wolf populations in other parts of the Western United States—such as California and Colorado—depend on the migration of wolves from the Northern Rocky Mountains. When wolves migrate, they can establish packs in new habitats and also connect different wolf populations, which

enhances genetic health. In contrast, killing wolves can limit this range of movement and fragment wolf populations.

In the face of such reckless conduct by these states, we and our allies submitted a legal petition to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in May 2021 requesting that federal protections be restored to wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains. The agency determined our request may be warranted in September 2021, when it launched a review of their status. Yet, in February 2024, the agency ultimately denied our petition—despite finding that wolf killing under state laws could reduce the region's wolf population from an estimated 2,534 wolves down to as few as 667 wolves.

Consider the facts. New Montana laws allow wolves to be killed using bait and strangulation snares, permit a single person to kill 20 wolves each year, and lengthen the state's wolf-trapping season.

In about 85% of Wyoming, including along the entire Colorado border, wolves can be killed without a license in nearly any manner and at any time. Wyoming hunters have killed several wolves just miles from the border with Colorado, a state to which wolves are finally returning through dispersal and release.

In Idaho, recent changes allow the state to hire private contractors to kill wolves, allow hunters to purchase an unlimited number of wolf-killing tags, and permit hunters to kill wolves by chasing them

down with hounds and all-terrain vehicles.

And right now, with respect to that state, we're doing something about the carnage. Last month, we and our allies succeeded in obtaining an injunction halting wolf trapping in parts of Idaho. The court agreed that indiscriminate traps and snares set for wolves under Idaho's liberal new laws will unavoidably injure or kill federally protected grizzly bears. But protecting wolves needs to be an end in itself, not a contingent consequence of protecting other animals. While this is an important victory, wolves in Idaho and across the northern Rockies are still imperiled by reckless state management practices. Federal protections are necessary to ensure their survival.

Nearly 30 years after the first wolves were brought back to Yellowstone National Park and the Northern Rockies, and after millions of tax dollars spent on this important restoration, they are once again on the precipice of disaster.

The evidence for relisting Northern Rocky Mountain wolves under the Endangered Species Act is overwhelming, and we will not stand by while the federal government allows Northern Rockies states to continue their hostile assault on wolves. We're taking our fight to court on behalf of wolves in that region and the millions of Americans who care about them and want to see them protected.

Conservation groups challenge federal decision to deny western wolves protections

Erik Molvar | April 8, 2024



BOISE, Ida. – Today, 10 conservation groups challenged the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (“the Service”) over its failure to list western wolves under the Endangered Species Act (non-stamped complaint here, stamped complaint will be posted here when available). The Service’s “not warranted” finding ignores obvious threats to the species, runs contrary to the best available science, and relies on flawed population models for its determination.

“The current killing regimes in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming put wolves at obvious risk of extinction in the foreseeable future, and this core population is key to wolf survival in the West,” said Erik Molvar, a wildlife biologist and executive director of Western Watersheds Project. “The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is playing politics, pretending that the anti-wolf agendas of state governments constitute adequate conservation regulations and that the small and vulnerable condition of fledgling wolf populations elsewhere in the West somehow protect the species from extinction.”

In its “not warranted” finding, the Service confirmed that a western U.S. distinct population segment (DPS) is a valid entity for listing consideration, but cites a deeply flawed modeling exercise to conclude there is no risk of extinction for wolves in the West either now or in the foreseeable future.

A 2023 study by Dr. Robert Crabtree and others found the Montana state population model was badly biased, overestimating total wolf populations by as much as

50%. These researchers found this flawed population model constitutes a “precariously misleading situation for decision-makers that threatens wolf populations.” In an earlier analysis, Dr. Scott Creel found that data used in both the Idaho and Montana population models violate the assumptions of the models, meaning population estimations generated by the models are unreliable. Yet the Service relied on these flawed population estimates to conclude wolves in the West are not at risk of extinction.

A second 2023 study by wolf geneticist Dr. Bridgett vonHoldt and others found wolf populations in the northern Rockies are losing genetic variability and below genetic minimum viable population levels at today’s populations. At present, wolf populations in California and the Cascade Range of western Oregon and Washington are far below minimum viable population thresholds, and Utah, Nevada, and northern Arizona, all of which have historic gray wolf habitat, have no wolves at all.

“The Service’s finding seems to give the green light for states hostile to wolves to follow suit with Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming’s aggressive killing regimes if they are eventually delisted and transferred to state management West wide,” said Kelly Nokes, an attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center representing the groups. “But wolves have yet to recover across vast portions of the West, and they exist in only small populations in the West Coast and Colorado habitats they are slowly reinhabiting. This legal challenge asks only for the protections needed

for this iconic species to be rightfully restored across the West’s wild landscapes—protections that some states have shown only the Endangered Species Act can really provide.”

"Idaho, Montana and Wyoming have become the poster children for what happens when politics trumps science," said Brooks Fahy, executive director of Predator Defense. "Science shows us the importance of intact pack structures, the vital role each family member plays. But these states are destroying wolf families in the Northern Rockies and cruelly driving them to functional extinction via bounties, wanton shooting, trapping, snaring, even running over them with snowmobiles. They have clearly demonstrated they are incapable of managing wolves, only of killing them."

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is supposed to be the backstop for imperiled species like the gray wolf," said Lizzy Pennock, carnivore coexistence attorney at WildEarth Guardians. "Instead, the Service decided that wolves in the Western U.S. do not qualify for federal protections, while Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming openly try to ‘manage’ wolves to the brink of local extinction. Wolves, and the American people, deserve better from this agency."

“It’s deeply concerning to hear that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has decided not to list gray wolves, a ‘sacred’ species to Native Americans in the western U.S., under the Endangered Species Act, while ignoring traditional sacred religious beliefs of Native Americans,” said Roger Dobson with Protect The Wolves. “It’s important to protect these intelligent and family-oriented predators to maintain ecosystem health, and to protect Native Americans’ ‘sacred religious beliefs.’ Hopefully, the Service will take steps to address these issues with its determination before it’s too late for these native wildlife species, and before violating Indigenous religious beliefs.”

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service committed to ‘immediately pursue’ emergency Endangered Species Act listing of wolves if any state allowed unlimited and unregulated killing of wolves, which Idaho has done since July 1, 2021,” said Suzanne Asha Stone, director of the Idaho-based International Wildlife Coexistence Network. “The Service has failed to honor its delisting plan just as the state of Idaho has failed to manage wolves ‘like mountain lions and black bears’ as they publicly

swore to do before wolf delisting. Aerial gunning of animals, killing pups for bounties, and widespread traps and deadly snares have no place in responsible wildlife management today.”

“Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming know that they were let off the hook in their brutal and unethical destruction of wolves even acknowledged as such by the Service,” said KC York, founder and president of Trap Free Montana. “They set the stage for other states to follow. Despite the best available science, the USFWS turned their backs on the Northern Rockies region gray wolves. Within just 60 days since the USFWS failed to relist them, we are already witnessing the disturbing onset of giving the fox the key to the hen house and abandoning the farm. The maltreatment is now destined to worsen for these wolves and other indiscriminate species, through overt, deceptive, well-orchestrated, secretive, and legal actions.”

“The Biden administration and its Fish and Wildlife Service are complicit in the horrific war on wolves being waged by the states of Idaho, Wyoming and Montana,” said George Nickas, executive director of Wilderness Watch. “Idaho is fighting to open airstrips all over the backcountry, including in designated Wilderness, to get more hunters to wipe out wolves in their most remote hideouts. Montana is resorting to night hunting and shooting over bait and Wyoming has simply declared an open season. It’s unfortunate that citizens have to turn to the courts, but it seems that like their state counterparts, federal officials have lost all reverence or respect for these iconic wilderness animals.”

"Since wolves began re-establishing in western states after the indiscriminate killing of the 19th and 20th centuries, U.S. citizens have had the opportunity to directly observe wolves in these incredible landscapes we are privileged to share," said Jeff Juel, forest policy director of Friends of the Clearwater. "And in understanding the wolf as our wild relative in this community of life, we urge the Fish and Wildlife Service to reject the primitive, fear-based impulses some states exhibit with their regressive management."

US appeals court kills ban on plastic containers contaminated with PFAS

Conservative fifth circuit overturns EPA's ban prohibiting Inhance from using manufacturing process creating toxic compound

Tom Perkins | The Guardian | March 30, 2024



‘Given how strong the EPA's orders [to ban the containers] were, I can’t imagine they will throw their hands up and walk away.’ Photograph: Tonelson/Getty Images/iStockphoto

A federal appeals court in the US has killed a ban on plastic containers contaminated with highly toxic PFAS “forever chemicals” found to leach at alarming levels into food, cosmetics, household cleaners, pesticides and other products across the economy.

Houston-based Inhance manufactures an estimated 200m containers annually with a process that creates, among other chemicals, PFOA, a toxic PFAS compound. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December prohibited Inhance from using the manufacturing process.

But the conservative fifth circuit court of appeals court overturned the ban. The judges did not deny the containers’ health risks, but said the EPA could not regulate the buckets under the statute it used.

The rule requires companies to alert the EPA if a new industrial process creates hazardous chemicals. Inhance has produced the containers for decades and argued that its process is not new, so it is not subject to the regulations. The EPA argued that it only became aware that Inhance’s process created PFOA in 2020, so it could be regulated as a new use, but the court disagreed.

“The court did not dispute EPA’s underlying decision that this is a danger to human health, what they did was say it’s not a new use, which I think is wrong ..but this case

isn’t over by any stretch,” said Kyla Bennett, a former EPA official now with the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (Peer) non-profit, which has been involved in legal proceedings.

PFAS are a class of about 15,000 compounds used to make products resistant to water, stains and heat. They are known as “forever chemicals” because they do not naturally break down, and they have been linked to cancer, high cholesterol, liver disease, kidney disease, fetal complications and other serious health problems.

The EPA said in a statement to the Guardian that it was reviewing the decision.

Inhance said in a statement its “technologies ... keep thousands of tons of harmful chemicals and fuels out of the environment, preserve product quality, and ensure compliance with many global regulations”.

However, the company in 2021 admitted the creation of PFAS is “an unavoidable aspect” of its process.

The decision is the latest salvo in a four-year legal fight over the company’s manufacturing process. Inhance treats containers with fluorinated gas to create a barrier that helps keep products from degrading.

A peer-reviewed study in 2011 found Inhance’s containers leached the toxic compounds into their contents. Bennett and the EPA found in 2020 that PFAS were leaching into pesticides held by containers Inhance produced, and several follow-up studies reconfirmed the problem. Since 2020, some public health advocates have accused Inhance of misleading regulators and customers about whether PFAS leached from its containers and resisting EPA demands to submit its process for review. Inhance denies the allegations.

The company is facing a separate lawsuit from a pesticide maker who claims Inhance concealed its products’ dangers.

The fifth circuit judges wrote that the EPA would have to regulate the containers under section 6 of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), which the judges and Inhance claim would require the EPA to take into account the economic impact on Inhance. The company has said a ban on its fluorination process would put it out of business.

However, Peer noted section 6 states health risks should be weighed “without consideration of costs or other non-risk factors”.

Bennett also noted that the EPA and other companies have found alternatives to treating containers with PFAS, including those that are strong enough for storing highly corrosive substances, like pesticides.

Another lawsuit over the containers is playing out in federal court in Pennsylvania, and a contradictory decision from it could send the issue to the US supreme court. The EPA has other options, Bennett stressed, including section 6.

“Given how strong the EPA’s orders [to ban the containers] were, I can’t imagine they will throw their hands up and walk away,” she said.

Survey Finds 257 Mexican Gray Wolves Living in U.S. Southwest Despite Small Increase, Wolves Imperiled by Inbreeding, Isolation

Michael Robinson | Center for Biological Diversity | March 5, 2024



SILVER CITY, N.M.— The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that the number of endangered Mexican gray wolves in the Southwest grew by 15 last year — from 242 in 2022 to 257 in 2023. Of those 257 wolves, 144 were observed or tracked in western New Mexico and 113 in eastern Arizona.

The tepid 6% growth occurred mostly through reproduction in the wild; wolves who were released from captivity into the wild did not fare well. There were 87 pups-of-the-year seen alive at the end of 2023, including only one surviving pup out of 16 captive-born pups released into the dens of wild wolves last year.

“Mexican wolves’ population growth renders them more resilient to perils ranging from wildfires to poachers, but these numbers are still disappointingly low,” said Michael Robinson, a senior conservation advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity. “I no longer worry that all the wolves could suddenly disappear. While that’s clearly a good thing, the government’s genetic mismanagement still threatens to doom this unique, arid-lands subspecies of the gray wolf.”

All the Mexican gray wolves who have been reintroduced since 1998 came from just seven wild-caught wolves bred in captivity decades ago. Since that time the genetic diversity in today’s reintroduced population has dropped to just 2.09 of those seven, meaning every Mexican gray wolf is almost as closely related to the next as siblings are. This genetic diversity was lost due to live removals and killings, coupled with few effective releases.

Releases from captivity are necessary but insufficient to diversify the wild population because the captive

population retains the genetic equivalent of 2.85 wolves, which is 36% more than in the wild population. In 2016 the Service began releasing captive-born pups. Since then 99 pups have been placed into wild wolves’ dens, but 73 of those 99 disappeared, while another 12 were found dead. Just 14 are known to be alive in the wild presently, including the one from last year.

Yet the Service still refuses to release wolf families from captivity together into the wild, a practice the agency itself has stated has a 66% success rate in areas with adequate prey. The last time the Service released a well-bonded male-female pair with pups was in 2006, after which it discontinued family releases because of livestock industry opposition.

“The tragic disappearances of three-quarters of the released pups, along with the Service’s failure to solve the genetic crisis it’s created, is an argument for immediately getting back to releasing wolves as families,” said Robinson. “Moms, dads and pups should gain their freedom together. That would give these irreplaceable animals the best chance of surviving.”

Introducing Mexican gray wolves into southwestern Colorado to mate with northern gray wolves in the southern Rocky Mountains would further help foster genetic diversity.

Mexican wolf fertility and pup survival have been documented to decrease from inbreeding, but the Service’s artificial feeding of wild wolves increases their fertility and pup survival rates without solving the underlying inbreeding. In 2023 the Service systematically fed 16 wolf families, amounting to 29% of the 56 packs present at the end of the year.

Thirty-one wolves are known to have died in 2023. The Service has tentatively identified 11 as having been killed illegally and will likely eventually determine, based on past examples, that most of the rest also died from gunshots. The alpha male of the Mangas pack was shot in April by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for killing cattle. Another male wolf in New Mexico died inadvertently in an agency-set leghold trap in September. Two died after being hit by vehicles, and one died after suffering an injury from natural causes.

Robot disguised as a coyote or fox will scare wildlife away from runways at Alaska airport

AP News | March 29, 2024



ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — A headless robot about the size of a labrador retriever will be camouflaged as a coyote or fox to ward off migratory birds and other wildlife at Alaska’s second largest airport, a state agency said.

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has named the new robot Aurora and said it will be based at the Fairbanks airport to “enhance and augment safety and operations,” the Anchorage Daily News reported.

The transportation department released a video of the robot climbing rocks, going up stairs and doing something akin to dancing while flashing green lights.

Those dancing skills will be put to use this fall during the migratory bird season when Aurora imitates predator-like movements to keep birds and other wildlife from settling near plane infields.

The plan is to have Aurora patrol an outdoor area near the runway every hour in an attempt to prevent harmful encounters between planes and wildlife, said Ryan Marlow, a program manager with the transportation department.

The robot can be disguised as a coyote or a fox by changing out replaceable panels, he said.

“The sole purpose of this is to act as a predator and allow for us to invoke that response in wildlife without having to use other means,” Marlow told legislators last week.

The panels would not be hyper-realistic, and Marlow said the agency decided against using animal fur to make sure Aurora remained waterproof.

The idea of using a robot came after officials rejected a plan to use flying drones spraying a repellent including grape juice.

Previous other deterrent efforts have included officials releasing pigs at a lake near the Anchorage airport in the 1990s, with the hope they would eat waterfowl eggs near

plane landing areas.

The test period in Fairbanks will also see how effective of a deterrent Aurora would be with larger animals and to see how moose and bears would respond to the robot, Marlow told the Anchorage newspaper.

Fairbanks “is leading the country with wildlife mitigation through the use of Aurora. Several airports across the country have implemented robots for various tasks such as cleaning, security patrols, and customer service,” agency spokesperson Danielle Tessen said in an email to The Associated Press.

In Alaska, wildlife service teams currently are used to scare birds and other wildlife away from runways with loud sounds, sometimes made with paintball guns.

Last year, there were 92 animal strikes near airports across Alaska, including 10 in Fairbanks, according to an Federal Aviation Administration database.

Most strikes resulted in no damage to the aircraft, but Marlow said the encounters can be expensive and dangerous in the rare instance when a bird is sucked into an engine, potentially causing a crash.

An AWACS jet crashed in 1995 when it hit a flock of geese, killing 24 people at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage.

If the test proves successful, Marlow said the agency could send similar robots to smaller airports in Alaska, which could be more cost effective than hiring human deterrent teams.

Aurora, which can be controlled from a table, computer or on an automated schedule, will always have a human handler with it, he said. It can navigate through rain or snow.

The robot from Boston Dynamics cost about \$70,000 and was paid for with a federal grant.

Understanding over fear — the Eastern Coyote

Wilson Kerr | The Concord Bridge
March 14, 2024

Coyotes are out and about, looking for love! Late winter is mating season, and their amorous pursuits mean they are seen more often. For some, this can be alarming.

This month, I hope to dispel coyote-related fears, but first, we need to talk about... wolves.

You see, prior to European settlement, New England was covered in old-growth forests, and large apex predators were common. For tens of thousands of years, timber wolves kept deer and moose populations strong by testing the herds for the easiest kill. Bears and mountain lions were here, too.

Almost upon arrival, settlers embarked on a 200-year shooting, poisoning and trapping campaign that made wolves extinct in New England by 1900 (along with many other species). Widespread deforestation also radically changed the landscape.

But nature detests a void, and in the 1950s, western coyotes started moving east, filling the ecological gap left by the wolves. With most other predators gone and the forests growing back, they found abundant prey and interbred with some of the last wolves along the way, creating a new, larger subspecies — the Eastern Coyote. Their dash of leftover wolf genetics is why some call them “coywolves.”

Today, they range across New England and are omnivores, eating a variety of small mammals, berries, amphibians, and even insects. They hunt deer, but usually just fawns and injured adults. Coyotes play an increasingly important (and helpful) role in reducing Lyme disease, as they eat a LOT of mice – a primary vector for ticks.

Know your coyotes

Heartier than their plains-dwelling western cousins, Eastern Coyotes weigh 30-50 pounds as adults. They look like medium-sized dogs, with a longer snout, pointy ears, and a bushy tail that points down when they run (a giveaway). They are smart, adaptable and highly social animals that communicate via howls and yips. Their Latin name is *Canis latrans*, which means “barking dog.”

In late winter, they breed, dig dens (usually in thickets of



Photo: MassWildlife

brush to hide the site), and have four to seven pups in the spring. Pups are weaned after nine months, and the number of pups born is tied to the density of coyotes in an area.

Eastern Coyotes live six to nine years, typically hunt alone or in pairs, and rarely group with other coyotes. Families are led by an alpha male or female who scent-mark a home territory of five to 25 miles. Most are light brown/grey, but some are very dark. They have adapted well here, with an estimated 10,000 in Massachusetts today.

A rightfully wary species

So, with so many around, why don’t we see them more often? This is because they become largely nocturnal in proximity to people, meaning most are active only at night. And for good reason — an estimated 400,000 are still shot and trapped in the U.S. annually.

They are rightfully wary of people and will almost always run in the opposite direction. While it can be surprising to see one, statistically speaking, people have very little to fear from coyotes. Attacks are extremely rare. That said, they are opportunistic hunters and leaving a chicken coop unlatched or letting your cat roam is unwise, especially at night. Common sense usually mitigates conflict.

In my view, having these beautiful animals here should be celebrated as a sign of an ecosystem that has adjusted and adapted to have all its parts, predators included. So, if you hear coyotes howling at night, I hope you will listen with different ears. Maybe even consider the sound a reminder of nature’s resilience and adaptation rather than something to be fearful of.

Wildlife managers report first possible wolf pack sighting in NV in over 100 years

Jeniffer Solis | The Nevada Current | March 28, 2024



State wildlife managers reported a possible wolf pack sighting in Nevada for the first time in over 100 years on Wednesday.

Last week, a helicopter crew conducting an aerial moose survey spotted three suspected wolves traveling together in northeast Nevada near Merritt Mountain, north of Elko. State wildlife biologists are now working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to confirm the sighting of one of Nevada’s most iconic native carnivores.

“The Nevada Department of Wildlife observed three suspected wolves, but we have not officially confirmed the sighting yet. We continue to investigate to learn more about the animals,” said Ashley Zeme, the public information officer for NDOW.

Fresh tracks in the area were consistent with wolves, according to state biologists, who conducted ground surveys immediately after the sighting. Those tracks led in the direction of the Idaho border, before disappearing in broken snow conditions. Within the next few months, DNA testing from two scat and hair samples collected in the area will definitively confirm whether or not the pack sighted were indeed wolves, according to NDOW.

A single gray wolf was documented in Nevada west of the Black Rock Desert in 2016. Before then, the last confirmed Nevada sighting of a wolf was in 1922, near Elko County’s Gold Creek.

“We are doing all we can to gather information regarding this sighting,” said NDOW Director Alan Jenne. “Nevada is not a historic habitat for wolves, and we’ve had very few confirmed sightings in the state. Wolves are not known to reside in the state of Nevada, but we know that they may occasionally cross state lines for brief periods.”

It’s unclear what species of wolf the Nevada pack may be, but they’re likely gray wolves, which are native to the region.

While Nevada has seen few confirmed wolf sightings in the last century, surrounding states have significant growing gray wolf populations. Idaho’s gray wolf population was estimated at 1,337 wolves in 2022, 37% higher than the original recovery goal for the animals, according to Idaho’s Department of Fish and Game.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2023 reported about 200 gray wolves in nearly 25 packs in the state. Oregon state biologists also warned that the

gray wolf population may have reached its ecological limit in the eastern third of the state, and that packs would likely spread out to the west and south in greater numbers.

As of 2024, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife said there are six known packs of gray wolves in the state for a total of 45 adult wolves, juveniles, and pups.

Amaroq Weiss, the senior wolf advocate at the conservation group Center for Biological Diversity, said the pack was fantastic news for the recovery of the gray wolf, which used to range across parts of Nevada, before being wiped out decades ago.

“All three of those neighboring states can become sources for more wolves to disperse into Nevada,” Weiss said.

“Wolves are a symbol of the wildness of the West, and Nevada is as wild as it gets. Their return shows why it’s so important to let wolves continue to recover under the protection of the Endangered Species Act,” she continued.

Young wolves often travel hundreds of miles seeking new territory and resources. It’s possible the wolves were following deer and moose across the landscape, said Weiss.

The helicopter survey crew, contracted by the Nevada Department of Wildlife, who spotted the possible Nevada wolf pack were on a scheduled moose collaring project when they sighted the three wolves.

For the past four years, the Nevada Department of Wildlife has collared and tracked moose in northeastern Nevada to better understand why the animals are quickly moving into the state. Wildlife managers say Nevada’s moose population has doubled over the past five years, increasing to a population of more than 100.

“If moose are newly coming into the state where they haven’t been before, that’s just another remarkable testament of how wildlife don’t just stay in one place, they move. If the state is welcoming moose back, they can certainly welcome wolves back as well,” Weiss said.

Gray wolves once ranged across all of North America, including the western United States. But decades of government-sponsored predator control programs brought gray wolves to near extinction in the lower 48 States. By the time wolves were protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, only a few hundred remained in northeastern Minnesota, and on Isle

Royale, Michigan, according to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

“We didn’t lose wolves in this country because of habitat loss — which is what usually happens when species become imperiled — we lost them because we killed them all,” Weiss said. “Every time you see a wolf showing up in a state where it seems like they’re brand new, they’re returning to places they once called home. It’s very uncommon for a wolf to suddenly walk into a place that the species has never been before.”

Gray wolves were also driven to near extinction in the Western U.S. after settlers overhunted most populations of bison, elk, deer, and moose — all important prey for wolves survival, according to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

It’s too early to say whether the pack sighting in northeast Nevada near Merritt Mountain is a prelude to continued wolf presence in the state. Gray wolves are incredibly adaptive to changes in environment, but wolves in the west prefer to inhabit areas with plenty of elk, deer, and moose.

NDOW assured the public they would work with state and federal agencies to protect public safety, and ensure that “Nevada ecosystems and natural resource industries are not negatively impacted by the presence of wolves in the state.”

While there is always concern that the presence of wolves may pose a threat to human safety, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service assures wolf attacks on humans are extremely rare in North America, even in Canada and Alaska, where there are consistently large wolf populations.

Livestock death by wolves is also very rare, according to a 2015 study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on cattle deaths. In Idaho — the state with the highest population of wolves in the west — wolf predation on the state’s reported 2.73 million livestock accounted for 0.004% of deaths. Nationwide, predator attacks on cattle accounted for only 2% of all deaths in adults, and 11% in calves. And of those, coyotes accounted for 40% of deaths, unknown predators accounted for about 16%, and dogs accounted for 11%.

“It’s actually a very, very small amount. But because in this country, we have this history of hating wolves, and eradicating wolves, that history and those feelings still persist,” Weiss said. “There are so many strategies that people know about these days to coexist with wolves, and it’s just a matter of learning and knowing about these techniques.”

MOTHER'S DAY

With the Wolves

Sunday,
May 12th
9-11am

Wolf Tour,
A Flower for Moms
and Snacks



Adults \$40 (12+)

Kids \$20 (6-11)

PREPAY EVENT

RESERVATIONS

719.687.9742

Colorado Wolf
and Wildlife Center

wolfeducation.org



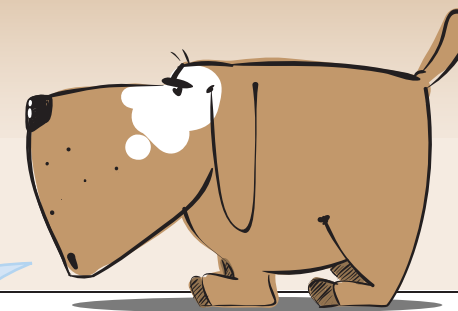
Adoption corner

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.]

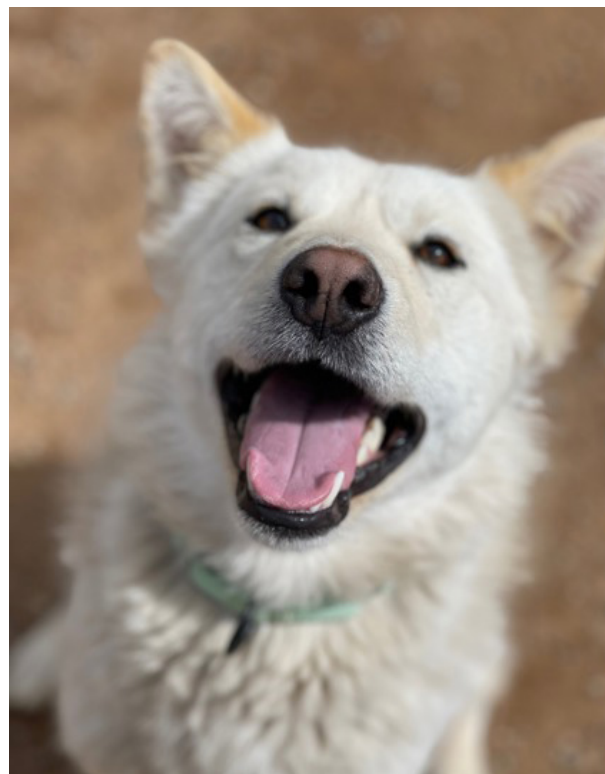
CATIER »

Hello. No my name is not a typo, I'm my own designer kitty! Sounds like "Cartier" but I made it my own! I'm a shy girl, very sweet but need my own time to open up. I'd love a quiet home that is all my own where I can be spoiled with all designer kitty accessories!

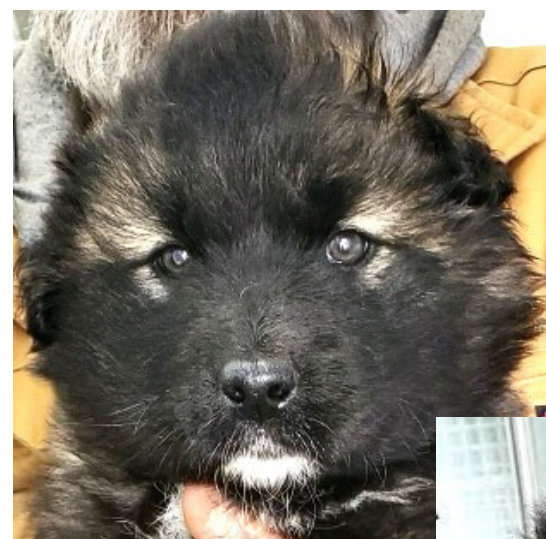


« APHRODITE

Hi there friends! My name is Aphrodite. I love my humans so much that I'll carry on a whole conversation with them! I am a bit nervous meeting new people but once I warm up, I'll love you forever! I'm a bit picky with my doggie friends mainly females; if you have any fur babies already, I would love to meet them beforehand. I have a medical condition that my friends at the shelter would like to speak with you about further prior to my adoption. I just need a little extra TLC.



**SLVAWS
ADOPTION FAIR**
Every Saturday at Petsmart
7680 N. Academy Blvd.
11:00am - 3:00pm



ANNA, ELSA, AND OLAF

Cuddly, playful chow mix girls Anna and Elsa and brother Olaf were abandoned in the snow in a southern Colorado small town.

After spay/neuter they would love new homes beginning May 4, 2024. They will have 3 sets of puppy shots, bordetella, microchips and rabies.