



THE
NORTH
AMERICAN
WOLF

No other animal in the world has been more persecuted over a greater period of time than the wolf. Even as early as two thousand years ago the Greeks paid bounties (money for dead animals or proof of their death) for this predator.

In our country the first wolf bounty laws were passed by the colonial lawmakers of Massachusetts in the year 1630. Later other states adopted similar measures against the wolf. By the middle of the eighteenth century when Connecticut finally repealed its bounty laws, wolves were almost extinct in New England. In the middle west, man kept driving the wolf farther north. Today there are only a few hundred wolves in northern Minnesota, which is the main breeding population in the states south of Canada. Some stragglers remain in Michigan and Wisconsin.

The wolf does not kill for the lust of killing, but only for food. Like other predators, it will always take the prey easiest to catch. In this way it weeds out old, sick, and excess animals from wild herds, and thus serves a purpose in the balance of our natural life.

The advocates of bounty laws gave no thought to the fact that the wolf's original food supply was diminishing. When man settled the west, buffalos almost disappeared in the 70's and 80's as they were hunted down for their hides or for food. Since they had provided the wolf's main sustenance, he was forced to turn to raiding domestic herds of cattle and sheep.

The result was that ranchers and farmers came to consider wolves a serious threat to their existence, and they made every effort to hunt down and kill the animals. The young were taken from their dens and destroyed. Adults were shot, and traps and poison bait were used extensively. Great sums of money have been paid in wolf bounties.

During our colonial days members of the wolf family were abundant in what is now United States territory. The gray or timber wolf of the north, *Canis Iupus*, is the largest of the wild dog family. It varies in color from black to almost white and is similar in size and appearance to a German Shephard dog.

The smaller red wolf of the south is of the species *Canis niger*. Unfortunately this animal, now confined to a limited area in Texas and the southwest, is still being hunted unmercifully by man.

Unlike some animals that have benefited by civilization the wolf will always be a creature of the wild. If the few remaining wilderness areas where it still exists become reduced because of our expanding population, then the range of the wolf will also decline. Man should therefore let the few stragglers in the forested sections of our northern states live unmolested.

The American wolf is a beautiful wild animal with many good qualities. It should be preserved as part of our natural wildlife heritage.

Salem, Oregon

Mary Adrian



WOLVES & HUMANS

The Science Museum of Minnesota

Wolf Facts

Common name: eastern timber wolf

Latin name: Canis lupus

Order: Carnivora

Family: Canidae

Length: tip of nose to tip of tail:
male: 5' to 6.5'
female: 4.5' to 6'
tail: 13"-20" of this length

Height: 26"-32" tall (at shoulder)

Weight: male: 70-85 lbs, rarely over 100 lbs.
female: 55-75 lbs, rarely over 85 lbs.

Teeth: 42, canine approximately 1 1/8" or 2 1/4"
including root

Color: buff tans grizzled with grey and black
(most common)
all black phase and white phase (less
common)

General description: largest of canine family, ancestor of
dog
muscular, lean, narrow "keel-like" chest
long legs, walks on toes (adapted for
speed and running)
large feet aid in rough terrain and
deep snow

Senses: keen sense of sight, hearing and smell

Strength: jaws can exert 1500 lbs/in²

Travel speed: can trot at 5 mph for hours, during a
chase reach estimated speeds of 28 to
35 or 40 mph which they can maintain
up to 20 minutes

Life span: about 10 to 16 years

Territory: occupy home range at rate of 1 wolf per
10 square miles (e.g. 8 wolves= 80
sq. mi.)
defend with scent marking and vocaliza-
tion
remain in pack over several generations

Pups: born in April-May (63 day gestation)
blind, deaf, black in color, weigh 1 lb.
hear in a few days, see at 11-15 days,
howl at about 1 month
litter size: 4-7
mortality: 50% first year
mature at: 2 to 3 years (male)
2 years (female)
den: in caves, cavities, between rocks
rendezvous site: numerous sites where
pups stay in care of one adult while
others hunt before pups can travel
with pack

Group
hunters:

"apex" predators at the top of the food
chain--kill large animals such as
deer and moose, also eat beaver and
small mammals.
kill what is easiest to catch: weak,
sick, injured, old and young. But
they are opportunists and will kill
healthy animals, scavenge carrion and
occasionally livestock.
one wolf eats an estimated 15 deer/year
plus other food
can eat up to 1/5 of their weight at
one time

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Social Organization of the Wolf Pack

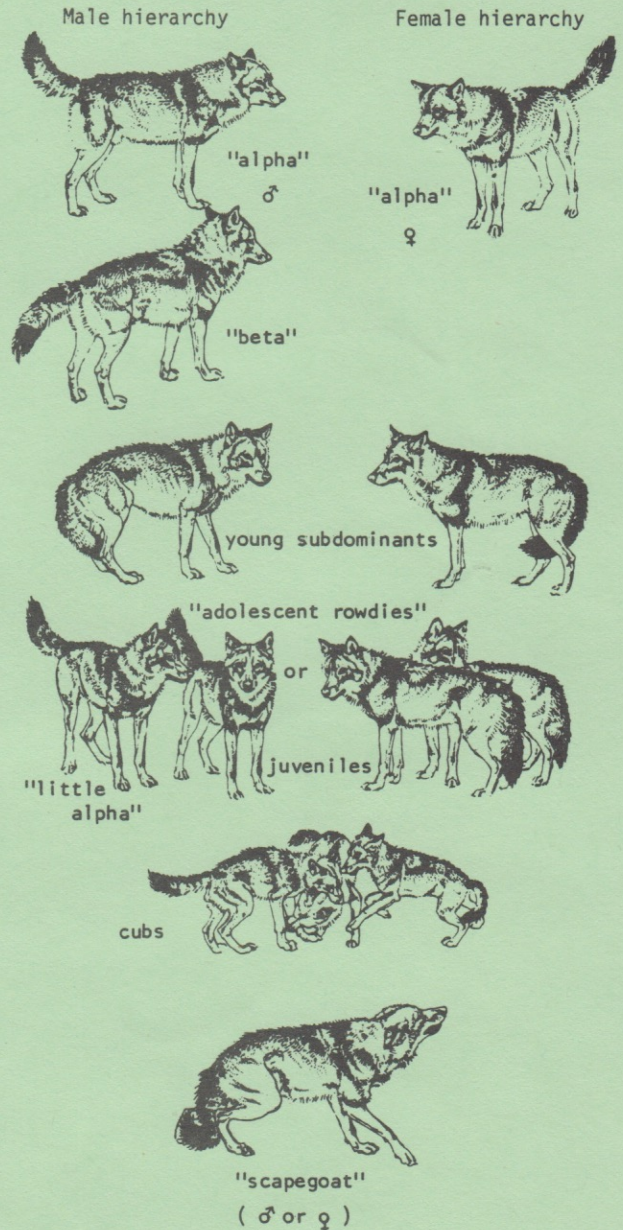
A wolf pack is a complex social structure with a definite hierarchy. It is usually a family unit consisting of a breeding adult pair and their offspring: subordinate adults, juveniles and pups. Normally, it numbers less than eight.

The pack is led by an adult male called the alpha male. The alpha female is the breeding female; only one female in a pack has pups each year. The rest of the pack has a definite place in the hierarchy, with the pups having a small hierarchy of their own. However, the structure is dynamic and changes within the pack over the years.

This hierarchy within a pack helps it to function as a unit. It is maintained through displays of dominance and submission using facial and body postures, facial expressions, scent marking, vocalization and rituals.

As pups and juveniles mature they become "dispersers" or "biders." Biders are the submissive wolves who bide their time until they can move up within the pack or inherit the pack territory upon the death of the alpha pair. Dispersers appear more dominant and leave the pack. They become the lone wolf in search of a mate and a territory. If successful they form a new pack, find a new territory and the cycle begins again. If not successful, they perish.

WOLF SOCIAL RANK (HIERARCHY) STRUCTURE



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Wolf Lore

These stories show two different images of the wolf, from two different cultures. In "The Man Whom the Wolves Helped," from the Tahlitan of the Canadian Rockies, the wolf is a helper and teacher. The German tale, on the other hand, portrays the wolf as foolish.

THE MAN WHOM THE WOLVES HELPED

An old man called XE'nda, and many people, were hunting caribou but they could not kill any. They were starving, and became weak. XE'nda went hunting one day, although he could hardly walk. He came on a long trail of fresh caribou tracks, and followed it. After a while he came to where a number of snowshoe tracks followed behind the caribou. He saw where the caribou had begun to jump, and the people had run after them. Soon he came on a dead caribou, then on another and another. He thought some of the people had killed them. He pressed on, and soon heard talking, and then saw a number of strange people beside some dead caribou. They called out in the Kaska language, "A man is coming!" and then invited him to come nearer. He asked them who had killed the game. They answered that they had. They lighted a fire, and cooked and ate the two caribou there. They said to XE'nda, "Your snowshoes are too narrow. You cannot run fast with them, and the caribou get away. If you use snowshoes like those we have, you will be able to travel better and get game." They showed their snowshoes to XE'nda, and further told him he could have all the caribou they had killed. XE'nda thought he must have slept; and when he woke up, the fire was

out, and two caribou-skins were lying there. He looked for tracks, and saw only wolf-tracks. He returned to camp, and on the way came to the caribou-carcasses he had first seen. He cut out some meat and took it along. He told the people that he had killed caribou, and the people went out at once to carry in the meat. When they got to the carcasses, they saw that the caribou had been killed by wolves, and they knew that the wolves had helped XE'nda. After this, the people made snowshoes like those the Wolves had shown to XE'nda, and they obtained more game. In this way did the Tahlitan learn how to make the shovel-nosed snowshoes they now use; and this is why snowshoes of this kind are called "Wolf snowshoes."

--Teit, James A. "Tahlitan Tales."
Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 32,
p. 250.

A GERMAN FOLKTALE

The wolf was ravenously hungry. In the forest there was nothing left for him to catch, and so he had to attack the villages in order to appease his hunger.

Getting near the village, he met the fox and said to him, "Tell me, fox, how can I get something to eat? I am starving. You know this place. If you don't tell me, I will tear you to pieces."

The fox replied, "Be quiet. I shall get enough food for you. There is a beekeeper who has four big pots full of honey in the cellar. As soon as he goes to bed we can go there." After a while, the fox said, "Now we can start. Follow

me. He has gone to sleep." They went along the hedge to the house of the beekeeper, and the fox said, "Here is the vent of the cellar. There is nobody around. You need not be afraid." The fox crept inside, and the wolf followed.

In the cellar, the fox said, "Here are four pots. The first one is for me--I have already had half of it. The second one is for you." The wolf fell to his pot, and the fox went to his. When the fox had enough, he went to the vent to see if he could still squeeze through. He could, and so he went back to eat. Then he tried a second time.

The wolf said, "Where are you going all the time?"

The fox replied, "I'll just go to see whether the road is clear. You just go on eating."

That seemed all right to the wolf. The fox went for the third time. But the beekeeper was not sleeping any longer. The fox went to tell him that the wolf was in the cellar eating the honey. He advised him to take a club in order to kill the wolf. The beekeeper got a stick, went to the cellar, and fell upon the wolf. The wolf tried to get out through the vent, but he was too fat and could not get through. He managed to get his head and front legs out, but not his body. The beekeeper gave him a sound beating. In his great distress, the wolf finally freed himself.

The fox waited behind the hedge in order to find out if the wolf would come back.

"Now I am going to tear you to pieces!" the wolf shouted. "You have betrayed me. It is your fault that I was beaten."

The fox justified himself as well as he could by saying, "I had to run myself. I had no time to warn you."

But the wolf was very cross. "You are a liar, and I am going to kill you."

Now the fox was in a corner and said, "You can, of course, kill me, for you are stronger than I; but I am innocent. If you kill me, you will have to be ashamed in the presence of the other animals."

--Baumann, Lotte, translator, Folktales of Germany. University of Chicago Press, 1966.



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