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WolfPrint

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WolfPrint

Published by:
The UK Wolf Conservation Trust
Butlers Farm, Beenham,
Reading RG7 5NT
Tel & Fax: 0118 971 3330
e-mail: ukwct@ukwolf.org
www.ukwolf.org

Editor
Denise Taylor
Tel: 01788 832658
e-mail: denise.taylor@btinternet.com

Assistant Editor
Chris Senior

Editorial Team
Julia Bohanna, Andrew Matthews,
Gwynne Power, Sue Sefcik

Contributors to this issue:
William Lynn, Nick Lloyd
Chris Senior, Oliver Matla

Design and Artwork: Phil Dee Tel: 01788 546565

Patrons
Erich Klinghammer
Desmond Morris
Michelle Paver
Christoph Promberger

The UK Wolf Conservation Trust Directors
Nigel Bulmer
Charles Hicks
Tsa Palmer
Denise Taylor

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Aims of The UK Wolf Conservation Trust

- To enhance the conservation, scientific knowledge and public awareness of the environment.
- To stimulate greater interest in Wolves, their food, their habitat and their behaviour.
- To provide opportunities for both ethological research and for people to interact with Wolves.
- To improve the chances of survival of European Wolves in the wild.
- To set up an education programme for schools, conservationists and dog trainers.

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E ditorial



Wolves have recently returned to Germany, and are starting to increase in numbers. Previously any wolves that strayed over the border from Poland in to Germany were killed on sight. However, changes in attitude, both political and in general, and the fact that the wolves settled on an army base, giving a level of protection, has meant that they have been able to thrive. Although it is still early days, the signs for the future of the wolf in Germany are looking much more positive. Oliver Matla has had a long association with the UK Wolf Conservation Trust, and recently gave a presentation at the last seminar held in April. Our assistant editor, Chris Senior, has written an article based on Oliver's presentation and subsequent discussions with him, which gives readers a fascinating insight into the history of wolves in Germany, and what is currently happening there.

We continue to work closely with Oliver and his colleagues at the German Wolf Association, and will be collaborating on future articles between our two respective publications: Wolf Print and Paw Print. (Thank you to the three volunteers who have offered their services to translate articles from German into English.)

Spain is one of the main destinations for holiday-makers from the UK, and yet few who travel there realise how many wolves there are in this beautiful country. Nick Lloyd runs a company called Iberia Nature (www.iberianature.com), which is a guide to the wildlife of Spain. Drawing on his experience and knowledge, Nick has written about wolves in Spain with an update on their current situation. (See page 9).

By now, regular readers of Wolf Print will be familiar with Bill Lynn's thought provoking style of bringing ethics to wildlife conservation. In this issue, Bill explores the ethics of predator prey dynamics and the morality of killing other creatures. Should wolf conservationists also be concerned about the prey species that wolves kill when we are involved in wolf reintroduction, increasing wolf numbers, and conserving existing populations? Read Ethos on page 12.

As I write, I am delighted to report that our three wolf pups at the UKWCT are thriving, and are an absolute delight to be with. We couldn't resist the opportunity of a cover shot of the pups...

And finally, Chris Senior and myself are about to embark on a trip to Russia with our colleague, Alex Hampson, to visit the Biological Station in the Tver region run by Vladimir Bologov and his colleagues. We have recently published two articles on wolf conservation in Russia, and we will bring you a first-hand update in the winter issue of Wolf Print. The UKWCT has already sent some financial support to the project in Russia by donating the monies raised from the recent seminar auction. Thank you to delegates who purchased auction items and helped us to raise this money. If you would like to learn more about the Russian wolf project visit www.russianwolves.org.

DTaylor

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Wolf Print on line



WOLVES

of the

WORLD ...

EUROPE AND SCANDINAVIA

Sweden

Join the pack

You don't have to go to Africa for a safari.

Richard Newton reveals Europe's wildest Edens

Anders Gustaf Carlson, my great-grandfather, died before I was born, but his advice on wolves has passed down through the family. This would be my first visit to his native Sweden, and I hoped I wouldn't need it.

"When attacked by a wolf," he said, "reach down its throat, grab its tail and pull it inside out."

The other great Swedish predator, the brown bear, can be repelled in similar fashion. The day before my arrival in Dalarna county, three hours by train from Stockholm, a hunter went into a thicket in pursuit of a bear and was ambushed. In the midst of a ferocious mauling, he stuck a hand in the bear's mouth, gripped its tongue and used his other hand to dial for help on his mobile. From his hospital bed, he told Swedish television he didn't blame the bear for his injuries.

"I was trying to kill it; it tried to kill me. Those are the rules of hunting."

Sadly, the same respect is not accorded to wolves here. They have been badly served by folklore, which portrays them as child-eaters — even though there hasn't been an attack for 200 years. By 1980, only one wild wolf remained. Few rural Swedes mourned.

Then, a few years back, something surprising happened. In the little Dalarna settlement of Furudal, the howling resumed. A pack had taken up residence just north of the village. Where on earth had they come from? And why?

Anders Stahl, an army officer turned wildlife guide, drove me through Furudal up a logging track to Brannvinsberget — Booze Mountain — the heart of the pack's territory. We parked and set off into the trees, the forest floor a patchwork of blueberry and moss.

With every footfall, my boots squeezed moisture out of the spongy surface; it was like trudging over a soggy mattress.

Vision was restricted by the pines; all sound was deadened. It felt strangely confining, yet in reality we were hiking into the largest contiguous habitat on

earth. This is the taiga — 6,000 miles of cold, coniferous forest that stretches from Scandinavia to the Russian far east.

The ecology here is simple to decipher. The abundant blueberries are prime bear food: we soon found fresh droppings stained red by the fruit's flesh. Chewed pine branches were proof of moose, the main prey of the wolves.

The Furudal pack probably emigrated from Norway or Finland, looking for a territory rich in their favourite nosh. They now number more than 80, and hunters complain they are whittling down the moose population. So, although officially protected, the wolves know better than to trust humans, and flee at first scent. Realistically, tracks and droppings were the most we could hope for.

In order to view our quarry eye to eye, Anders took me to Gronklitt Predator Centre, near the town of Orsa. The keepers showed us into the lynx enclosure, where we threw meat for the magnificent collie-sized cats to catch between their front paws. Their agility was stunning; in the wild, they can capture birds in flight.

We moved on to meet a bear and her two cubs, feeding them apples through a fence. Their teeth and claws were formidable: I could see just how miraculous the tongue-grabbing hunter's survival had been.

Finally, to the wolves. For 30 minutes, we walked the perimeter of their hilltop enclosure before at last spotting a lone animal staring at us one-eyed from behind a tree. "There!" said Anders, pointing through a gap in the trees; the rest of the pack trotted briefly into view before melting into thick cover again. I was transfixed. Perhaps some part of me was recalling that moment, thousands of years ago, when our respective ancestors chose to forge a mutually beneficial partnership and wolves became dogs.

So why does man now harbour such antipathy towards the wild cousins of his best friend? "Ignorance," Anders said. "Too many fairy stories, not enough understanding."

Back in the forest, Anders led me on through the taiga. We emerged onto a logging road, where at last we found fresh prints. "Too wide for a dog," he said. "Wolf!" We followed the trail for half a mile until it veered into the trees. "You don't need to see the animal. The tracks tell the story."





Places Referred To

- 1. Sweden
- 2. USA

Map Stefania Balbo

He didn't need to convince me. The family adage, the folk myths, centuries of superstition and my recent staring match at Gronklitt all helped to conjure out of these tracks a perceptible presence. I was walking with a wolf. And not just in spirit, either. When I looked back, it was written on the road: our footprints, side by side.

Source:
Sunday Times - Times Online

Richard Newton travelled as a guest of Discover the World Exploring Europe's wilder side

The tranquil beauty of Dalarna is the product of extreme violence: 350m years ago, the area was

struck by a meteorite. A ring of lakes marks the rim of its crater. Now everything is covered in taiga forest, a flutter and a scuttle with birds and mammals. The prime wolf-tracking time is winter: Anders Stahl can be contacted via www.artofnature.se.

In autumn, you can assist the zoologist Andrea Friebe (00 46-250 83040) in radio-tracking brown bears around the village of Kvarnberg, half an hour north of Furudal. Gronklitt Predator Centre (250 46200, <http://www.orsa-gronklitt.se>; £7) is open daily from mid-May to mid-September.

Take me there: Discover the World (01737 214255, <http://www.discovertheworld.co.uk>)

has three nights in Dalarna and two in Stockholm, including flights from Heathrow, guided wildlife excursions, a visit to Gronklitt and bear-tracking, from £1,292pp.

Source:
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2100-2229080,00.html>

Hunt for a home

After eluding experts for weeks the Jumeirah Islands wolf has finally been caught.

The animal, thought to be a cross between a rare Arabian Wolf and a dog, was captured by a group of Bedouin who had staked it out for days. "A lady in Emirates Hills used to feed it

biscuits regularly in the evening," said local resident Andreas Desai, who was involved in the capture.

"We set a trap at the spot. We hid behind some bushes and while the wolf was eating the biscuits, we shot a tranquiliser at him," he said. The wolf, unconscious but unharmed, has been taken to a nearby private farm. "The wolf is safe, healthy and fine," said Desai.

The capture brings to an end more than a week of hunting by experts, security guards and curious residents. One of the Bedouin, Mohammed, said the location would be revealed soon when it's been decided what to do with the animal.





It's likely it will either go to a zoo or remain on the farm. Arabian Wolves are thought to be virtually extinct in the wild. Residents of Jumeirah Islands and Emirates Hills have been reporting sightings for weeks. While most were curious about the rare animal, some were afraid it could be dangerous.

But despite those fears the 'hunters' took their time in catching the animal. "The reason it took so long to capture the wolf was that we did not want to harm it in any way," said Desai.

Source:
<http://www.7days.ae/2006/07/09/hunt-for-a-home.html>

UNITED STATES

Red wolves on the road to recovery Once almost extinct, the wolves now roam Dare mainland

Among the sloppy, bog spattered forests of the Alligator River

National Wildlife Refuge (ARNWR) the endangered red wolf roams in numbers that pose a certain level of comfort, but as wildlife biologists speak with confidence toward a recovery of the species, a watchful eye is always maintained.

Rising from a wild population of merely 14 in 1980, an estimated 100 of these cinnamon-colored creatures comfortably make their home throughout the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge (ARNWR) and adjacent lands today. An additional 180 wolves comprise an intense captive breeding program that has been made possible only by trial and error.

The numbers reflect the efforts of biologists who have worked the past two-and-a-half decades to keep one of the world's most endangered species from becoming extinct.

Refuge biologist Michael Morse estimates that within the next 10-15 years, a pack of red wolves will be introduced into an additional

new habitat within the Southeastern U.S.

In the wild, the wolves are now in their fifth generation but, despite the success of the program, its positive results haven't come without some major challenges.

"When we began the project, it was the first time anything like this had ever been done in the world," said Morse, who has been with the program since its inception in the early 1980's. "Prior to this, there had never been a federal program that introduced captive animals into the wild."

The captive breeding program at the refuge has been introducing red wolves into the wild since 1987 and with great success. There are now 30 captive breeding facilities across the United States in places as far west as Tacoma, Washington that actively support the local refuge's efforts, says Morse.

The refuge annually sponsors caretakers who are often interns who live on premises in order to monitor the animals' health and feed them daily.

Morse and staff are now introducing pups as young as 10 weeks in with wild litters. The pups are openly accepted by the packs.

"Red wolves are very doting parents," said Morse. "The mother and father will stay paired for life."

The average life span of a red wolf in the wild is seven years and many are simply found dead of old age which biologists say is a very positive sign.

In the early stages of the recovery program, extensive efforts were taken to inform land owners that the wolves weren't a nuisance but a vital and healthy contribution to the environment. Hunters also were also informed of the difference between coyotes and red wolves and encouraged not to shoot on refuge designated lands.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service reported a near decimation of the species in the 1960's due to intensive predator control programs and loss of habitat. Morse additionally attributes a decline of the species to Tyrell



County court records which show that bounties were paid for red wolves from 1768 to 1789.

"They were killed for everything from the money to their pelts back then," he said.

Over the past 26 years, federal officials have secured 1.7 million acres of land for the recovery zone which is made up of a patchwork of three wildlife refugees, private lands and a US Department of Defense bombing range.

"The cooperation of people, specifically private land owners is the key to why this program has been such a success," said Morse.

The lands work cohesively to compromise the only wild range of red wolves in the world, where 18-22 packs currently roam in freedom.

The wolves have an innate ability to keep their population at a size that is comparable to the boundaries of their range which has been a pleasant surprise for biologists.

"They stay on top of their numbers with intensity," said Morse.

The help of non-profit organizations such as the Red Wolf Coalition, based in Columbia, are responsible for education and securing essential funds for the recovery of the species.

The Red Wolf Coalition along with refuge staff, sponsor a widely-attended series of howling safari's every summer that have played an integral part in educating the public on this often elusive creature.

The safari takes participants into the forest at dusk where they are encouraged to howl back and forth with the wolves and are often able to catch a glimpse of a wolf if it chooses to reveal itself.

As the top predator in the southeast for thousands of years, red wolves have adapted to their surroundings with a coat and a quiet, ghost-like presence that often makes them hard to see, said Morse. Refuge staff are currently in the process of securing an area where people are guaranteed to see one of the wolves up-close.

"Most people either love or hate wolves. I wish I could take everyone in the field with me so they can see how important the survival of this species is," said Morse. "We just want people to accept them for what they are."

The next howling safari will take place at 8 p.m. Wednesday, June 28, at the Creel Cut Wildlife Trail at the intersection of Milltail Road and Hwy 64. Participants are asked to register for the

safari by calling (252) 796-5600 or by going online at <http://www.redwolves.com/register>.

Source:

Charley Bunyea, Sentinel Staff
http://obsentinel.womacknewspapers.com/articles/2006/07/01/top_stories/tops187101.txt

Wolf center shifts educational focus

If you go to the International Wolf Center in Ely this year, you are likely to learn about some new aspects and challenges of wolf conservation. The center is still committed to advancing wolf survival through education, but in a world where wolves have exceeded population recovery goals in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and the northern Rockies, the issue is no longer "will the wolf survive?" Now it is more a question of whether humans coexist with the predator and whether wolves have wild habitat to live in as humans continue to turn forests and foothills into housing complexes.

The center's new "Wolves and Wild Lands in the 21st Century" exhibit highlights these new wolf conservation challenges and demonstrates a shift in the center's educational strategy.

"We are a small organization based solely in Minnesota, so we have been looking for ways to maximize our impact," said IWC Assistant Director Jim Williams.

To do this, the center has been prioritizing projects that they feel will have the biggest impact on wolf populations on the ground in two key geographic areas: the upper Midwest and the southwestern states of Arizona and New Mexico.

"In the Midwest, we are entering the post-endangered species era," said Williams. "And in the southwest, they are in the early stages of wolf recovery, but have run into barriers."

In each of these regions, the Ely-based Center is working to be a leader on wolf issues.

According to Williams, the organization is focusing on "multiplier effect" projects like teacher workshops, a new curriculum and the new traveling exhibit to help get their message out.

Source:

Kevin Strauss

Then and now

One way to see the differences in the center's approach is to compare its two exhibits: "Wolves and Humans" and "Wolves and Wild Lands." Both exhibits where traveling exhibits and according to Williams, the "Wolves and Humans" exhibit acted as a catalyst for wolf recovery in Yellowstone National Park in the early 1980s. In 1993, "Wolves and Humans" became the central museum exhibit at the International Wolf Center in Ely, where it has remained ever since.

While "Wolves and Humans" covers a wide range of wolf conservation issues from human folklore to wolf biology, ecology, historical wolf hunting and research, it doesn't address the many modern "management" issues that didn't exist in the 1980s.

"Wolves and Wild Lands" addresses several potentially provocative wolf management issues like sport hunting, wild land development, and livestock depredation head-on. The focus is much more on humans and human interactions with wolves and wolf habitat.

"We chose the title because we wanted people who care about wolves to stop looking just at short-term wolf recovery," said Williams. "People need to realize

that the habitat that wolves depend upon for survival is being destroyed at an alarming rate and if we are not careful, this may not be a sustained recovery."

In one study, if current development trends continue in Colorado, the number of wolves who could someday successfully live there will drop by 60 percent in the next 20 years.

Some of the panels may be surprising to long-time wolf conservationists. While some wolf conservation groups oppose a wolf hunting season, it is true that as wolf populations expand, they may require some level of management. Most states use a hunting season to control deer populations. The same may some day be true for wolves.

"Our exhibit leaves it up to viewers to decide what they think about wolf hunting," said Williams.

The exhibit also discusses strategies people can use to avoid conflicts with wolves. Now that wolf populations have "recovered" in the upper Midwest, humans will encounter wolves more often. Some simple changes in human behavior, like not feeding deer near homes, securing garbage and not leaving pet food outside can reduce chances that people will accidentally attract wolves to





their homes. It will also reduce the chances that wolves will get used to human contact and lose their fear of humans. In many cases, "problem wolves" are wolves that have lost their natural fear of people.

Non-advocacy

"The IWC aspires to provide objective information, both the good and the bad (about wolves)," said Williams.

Williams admits that this non-advocacy approach will probably invite some criticism from both ends of the wolf conservation spectrum.

"On some of these issues, both sides (pro-wolf and anti-wolf groups) are so polarized that there is often a willful inattention to the facts," said Williams.

According to Williams, the IWC sees its job as providing the facts about wolf conservation, wolf recovery and wolf management.

"I tell our staff that as educators, we have to serve two masters: we need to educate people to ensure wolf survival and we need to serve the objective truth," said Williams. "We have to be

equally committed to both. We can't let our commitment to ensure wolf survival undermine our commitment to tell the whole truth."

While some pro-wolf groups have criticized the center for not taking a more pro-advocacy role in the wolf debate, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Research and Policy Manager Mike DonCarlos sees things differently.

"(The Center) achieves its non-advocacy goal and this helps them provide more balanced wolf information to the public," said DonCarlos.

By comparison, advocacy groups on both sides of the wolf debate spread information that ranges from factual to various levels of distortion.

"The International Wolf Center sticks to the facts and if people are interested in having factual information from multiple viewpoints, the (IWC) does a great job of providing it," said DonCarlos.

Getting people to talk

That balanced approach to wolf issues has positioned the center as a credible educational

organization that can help diverse groups in other regions come to the table to work on wolf conservation issues.

The center is involved in a project to get stakeholders to the table on wolf issues in the American southwest. The center is the co-founder of the Southwest Wolf Information Network, a coalition of over 30 organizations including ranching, hunting, government and environmental groups.

Right now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates a small wolf recovery project on the Arizona/New Mexico border, but it has yet to complete the region-wide recovery plan to insure wolf recovery for the southwest region as a whole. Part of the hold-up has to do with the lawsuits pro- and anti-wolf groups are filing over these wolf issues.

"There has been a political war between the environmentalists and the ranchers, and one casualty of the war has been a public understanding of the costs and benefits of wolf recovery," said Williams.

According to Williams, this approach didn't seem to be working for either side. In

addition, the center didn't have the resources to mount a large-scale educational campaign in the region. The network seems to be solving both problems by providing a forum for groups to share and discuss factual information about wolf conservation.

Member groups can then take that information back to their own organizations.

"Environmentalists tend to educate environmentalists and ranchers tend to educate ranchers," said Williams. "This way we can help each other do a better job, because no one person can have the expertise on all aspects of wolf issues, but collectively, (the network) does have expertise in all of these areas."

Williams stated that this collaboration has already helped his organization and other groups find and fix factual errors or hidden bias in educational materials.

"The group is already working," said Williams. "People in this group who could not disagree more vehemently about wolf issues have agreed that there should be a civil debate about the issues."

Source:

<http://www.timberjay.com/current.php?article=2411>

Wolf Progress Report - Wisconsin

The most recent Wisconsin wolf progress report is available. It covers the winter 2005-2006 monitoring period. To obtain a copy of the report email denise.taylor@btinternet.com or Adrian.Wydeven@dnr.state.wi.us. The report is detailed with charts and graphs. The electronic file is 2MB.

Our thanks to Pat Morris (Wolfseeker) for the regular supply of wolf news from around the world. Articles that are reprinted in full are appropriately credited with the author's name and details of where the article was first published.

Wolves In Spain

Spain is one of the last remaining refuges of the European wolf. Though no complete census has been carried out since 1988, there are probably a low of some 1500 individuals in early spring and 2,000-2,500 at the peak after litter is born. This represents almost 30% of European wolf numbers outside the ex-USSR.

The Iberian wolf is considered by some specialists as a sub-species (*Canis lupus signatus*) of *Canis lupus*, though this is rejected by many in the field. *Signatus* means marked in reference to the black marks along the tail, back, jowls and front legs of . Spanish wolves. Like most large mammals in the Iberian Peninsula, wolves are smaller here than their Northern European counterparts, but larger than those in North Africa. This is an adaptation to the harsh grassless summers which support a lower density of prey, themselves smaller in weight.

Distribution

Wolves were once present throughout the Peninsula, they are now confined to the North-east (Asturias, Leon, Northern Castilla, Galicia), and a few residual populations in the Sierra Morena (Jaén and Cuenca). More than 50 % are found in Northern Castilla y León (approximately 1000 individuals), and less than 35% in Galicia

(500), with the densest population in North-eastern Zamora (5-7 wolves/100km²). Recently, however they have managed to cross back over the modern-day barrier of the River Duero and begun to spread southwards and eastwards. Estimates of numbers vary but there are perhaps some 300 breeding pairs, giving a total number of around 1,500 at the start of spring and around 2,000 by mid autumn. The wolf in Spain is no longer considered endangered, merely vulnerable, though the Sierra Morena (Andalusia) and Extremaduran populations are classified as critically endangered, and the latter is almost certainly extinct. Wolves in the Sierra Morena inhabit private game estates where they are illegally persecuted as they come into conflict with the hunting practices of the rich. A 2001 study by the University de Jaen found 9-11 family groups, representing 63-77 wolves. Across the border in Portugal, there are reckoned to be between 46 and 62 packs, though the recent 2004 and 2005 fires may have reduced these numbers.

Recovery in population

The Iberian wolf population is slowly recovering from its 1970 low of 400-500 odd individuals. Whether this increase is continuing or has stagnated due to persecution is a matter of debate.

There are several reasons for this increase. Firstly until the early 1970s the wolf was 'officially' considered as a pest in Spain, and the government paid out bounties for dead wolves and distributed strychnine to landowners and peasants. At the time, many saw the wolf as a mark of a Third World country, in contrast to 'civilized' nations like France and Britain who had successfully eradicated their wolf plagues. On occasions in the past, persecution was widespread and crushing. An act passed by Principality of Asturias details that between March and December 1816, bounties were paid out for the death of 76 adult and 414 young wolves at 160 reales for an adult wolf and 32 for a wolf cub. The historian Juan Pablo Torrente concluded that the hunting of wild beasts, including wolves, bears and foxes represented, 'in absolute and relative terms, a considerable source of wealth' for local populations. The *lobero* or wolf-hunter was a respected county figure until relatively recently, and a whole range of ingenious traps were devised over the centuries to catch wolves. All are now illegal. It is however still legal to hunt wolves in most of Spain. In most of its range, the Law states that the species must be respected as long as it does not come into conflict with human interests. While hunting itself does not necessarily pose a big threat for the Iberian wolf, as most hunts end in failure, the Law gives carte blanche for indiscriminate hunting in most areas. In Castilla-León, home to 50% of wolves in Spain, a 2006 white paper on wolf conservation intends to turn the wolf from a managed species into a game species, and to extend this status to the currently protected population south of the Duero. Wolf conservationists see this as a dangerous precedent for such a fragile species.

Secondly, in the last 40 years there has been a huge migration of people from the country to the towns. This depopulation has led to the regeneration of natural vegetation in former agricultural areas and the huge increase in prey species such as roe deer and boar. Just drive or take a train across central and northern Spain and you will appreciate the immensity and emptiness of the landscape, and its potential to support rich and varied fauna. While not all species have benefited from this re-wilding, wolves and their prey have definitely been winners.

Thirdly, people's attitudes have changed. While there is still much suspicion, when not outright hate, among some rural populations, many in Spain now see the wolf as an animal worthy of protection. That great Spanish populist of nature, **Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente**, played no small part in this conversion. Millions of homes in Spain in the nineteen-seventies were captivated by his



Photo: Francisco Álvares



Photo: Rui Vasco

television series, 'El Hombre y la Tierra', of which the wolf was the star of the show. Rodríguez used wolves he had raised himself from cubs living in a semi-wild fenced estate for the film. Yet, for all its trickery, the episode on el lobo still stand out as superb and beautiful piece of nature documentary and holds a rightful place in contemporary Spanish folk memory. Rodríguez also inspired a whole generation of conservationists and naturalists, many of whom are at the forefront of the defence of the wolf today. His early death in a helicopter accident in Alaska was an incalculable loss for Spanish conservationism.

Habitat and diet

The ideal habitat for Iberian wolves in Spain encompasses a low human population density (less than 10 inhabitants/km²), protective cover against man, and a high density of prey species such as roe deer and boar, though given the famed adaptability of the wolf to different environs, probably the single most important factor is the native human population's tolerance of the species. Spanish wolf diet varies enormously depending on the area. While Galician wolves partly feed off the remains of chicken and pig farms, Cantabrian wolves take red and roe deer and wild boar, and almost 50% of the diet of the wolves in the Castilian cereal belt is thought to be rabbits. For centuries and until recently, their biggest source of nutrition was livestock, most of which was taken as carrion. The recent EU's banning of leaving dead animals in the field because of fear of mad cow's disease has had a huge negative effect on wolves and other mammals and to a lesser extent birds (vultures and their kin in many areas are now supported by artificial feeding centres). As a result, wolves are killing more living sheep and cows. This has become increasingly a source of friction

Wolves play an important role as 'top dog' in the food chain. The renewed stable presence of the wolf in the Cordillera Cantábrica provides a natural check on wild boar, which are expanding throughout Spain in ever greater numbers into just about every ecosystem. This check on the boar population may well be good news for the incredibly endangered capercaillie, whose Cantabrian population has plummeted in recent years. Boars, it seems are partial to capercaillie eggs and chicks.

Conflict with livestock and humans

In 1988, wolves were estimated to have killed some 1,200 horses and donkeys, 450 cows and 5,000 sheep and goats, representing a total loss of 720,000 euros. The figures are no doubt higher now, but over the wolf's full range (100,000 km²) these losses are tiny in comparison with other natural causes which regularly afflict farmers and herders (disease, inclement weather, lightning) but they can represent a serious problem for livestock raisers in certain local areas. 77% of livestock deaths occur in mountainous areas where extensive farming practices are prevalent.



Indeed, with just 15% of the 2,000 Spanish wolves, the Cantabrian wolves cause 70% of the damage to livestock. Clearly it is not that the Cantabrian wolves are any more aggressive, but rather that they find easy pickings in the plentiful livestock which graze in semi-freedom here. Unfortunately, wolves like many carnivores frequently get so excited by the blood and slaughter that they kill far more numbers of a flock than they need. In Spanish these attacks are known as *lobadas*. One study in Burgos showed an average of 7.6 sheep killed for every *lobada*. As another great Spanish naturalist Miguel Delibes once said, 'the wolf is its own worse enemy'. Whatever the case, the damage caused by wolves is often greatly exaggerated.

In the Sierra de la Culebra, with the highest wolf densities in the whole of the European Union, 80% of the attacks on flocks are only one sheep. Here flocks are protected by shepherds and dogs. Attacks on livestock are most frequent in areas where animals are not protected in pens or by mastin dogs or shepherds at night. This is most noted to the south of the Duero where despite having very low densities 'wolves' are responsible for numerous attacks, particularly in the Sayago dehesas. The fact that livestock raising methods are less compatible with the wolf is unsurprisingly given its long absence. But a word of warning, the area is also frequented by feral dogs which cause even more damage than the wolf with 11.6 animals affected per attack. These are invariably blamed on wolves. In all surety, feral dogs cause far more damage than wild wolves to Spanish flocks and herds. One statistic should suffice: an estimated 87,000 (eighty-seven thousand) dogs were abandoned in 2003 in Spain

Wolf management in Spain

Wolf management is no easy task. They draw highly conflicting stances and beliefs, from an idealisation on the part of the urban population to the pragmatics of the rural populace. One of Spain's specialists on the species, Juan Carlos Blanco, noted; "what makes this conflict strange, what turns the management of the wolf into a nightmare, is the symbolic nature of the species, which unleashes hidden tensions in society and brings to the surface seething emotions which confer on the problem a high degree of irrationality." The excessive wolf-friendliness of some urbanite ecologists does not exactly help to enamour the rural population with the wolf. And all too often the farmers' view is based on greed, ignorance and even hate as is evidenced week in week out in articles in the local press of wolf areas of Spain in which farmers, often goaded on by Partido Popular counsellors vastly inflate damage caused by the wolf. This reached surreal proportions in 2000 when Asturian sheep farmers put in compensation claims for more sheep killed by wolves than actually existed in the Principality. The solution undoubtedly is a mixed bag including: use of traditional mastiff dogs to protect flocks, bringing back the old practice of closing livestock in for the night instead of

leaving them untethered in the mountain pastures –increasingly and understandably farmers work only part time with their livestock, and so their animals are left up in the hills alone-, allowing prey species such as roe deer and chamois to grow unchecked by hunting, promoting tolerance for the wolf through educational programmes, reducing tensions between the different parties, encouraging dialogue, and perhaps most importantly the swift and full payment of compensation by the authorities for livestock killed.

Wolf traditions and legends in Spain

As everywhere else, superstitions around the wolf abound. There are said to be some 70 traditional expressions (*amigo*, *el otro*, *tío Juan*) that can be pronounced so that the speaker can avoid saying the word *lobo*, as the creature can be invoked at the merest utterance of the word. The first human records of the wolf in the Iberian Peninsula are in cave paintings such as those in Los Arcos (Jaén) and Tajo de las Figuras (Cadiz). Later, the wolf is a common animalistic motif in ancient Iberian vases, urns and dishes, usually reflecting the infernal character of the beast. In pre-Roman Spain, the wolf was strongly associated with the afterlife, this no doubt coming from wolves' habit of taking dead humans as carrion. However, the veritable fear and hate of the wolf appears to date from the Middle Ages when there was a widespread dread of the supposed occult powers of nature. It is at this time when fantastic creatures like werewolves begin to appear in many legends particularly in the west of the Peninsula. *Hombres-lobo* are known as *lobishomes* in Galicia. They are often associated with the curse of a parent.

The return of the wolf to Catalonia

News of the detection of the first wolf in more than 70 years hit the headlines in 2004. Contrary to many reports, the individual, a male, did NOT travel all the way from Italy. However, tests confirm that it is genetically Italian in origin, forming part of an expansion over a number generations out from the Apennines. The Apennine population began to expand in several directions from the early 1990's. It moved north into the Italian and Swiss Alps; north-east into the French Alps and Lyon, and east towards the Pyrenees, reaching the Maritime Alps near Nice by 1996, Saboya by 1998. An individual was detected between Areja and French Cerdanya by August 1998 in the Madres Massif, just to the north of Canigó, and finally by 2004 into the Cadí range. The last Catalan wolf was shot in Terra Alta in the south of the Principality in 1929, though the animal is thought to have disappeared from the Sierra de Cadí more than 100 years ago.

To the south, there was also a case of a proven wolf presence in Morella in 1987, just across the border in Castellón, Valencia. This was no doubt a freak case, but wolves are slowly moving westwards from their Castilian

strongholds. A pack is now established around Gallocanta in southern Aragon. Sooner or later packs of wolves are going to make their way along the Ebro corridor and into the mountains of southern Catalonia, and from here up the Cordilleras Costeras Catalanas...

Where to see wolves in Spain

They may be 1500-2500 Iberian wolves in Spain but if you want to see one in the wild, without expert help you're going to have to be persistent or lucky. Spanish wolves have long learnt to be wary of humans and so actual sightings are by no means common. Proof of this lies in the fact that most wolf hunts organised legally or illegally end in total failure. However, armed with a telescope and plenty of patience you do have a good chance of seeing a wolf, and if you have a good guide you have a very good chance of seeing a wolf. The best chance is probably Northern Zamora, where the highest wolf densities are found.

There are a couple of organisations which organise wolf-watching trips

- Sergi Garcia of the Barcelona-based wildlife organisation, Galanthus, periodically organises wolf-watching trips to the Sierra de la Culebra in Zamora (608 26 30 70. - <http://www.asgalanthus.org/>). Tracking forms an important part of the trip. I regularly accompany Sergi Garcia on these trips.
- Barcelona-based Cedam also runs trips to Sierra de la Culebra. Expert guides.
- Alternatively, you can see captive Spanish wolves in largish enclosures, here: Centro de Naturaleza Cañada Real (Peralejo, near El Escorial, 48km from Madrid): tel. 91 890 6980 / 91 890 8748, fax 91 890 0451.

Nick Lloyd writes and runs the iberianature.com website, a guide to the nature and wildlife of Spain. An adapted version of this article is to appear in the forthcoming book "A Guide to the Natural History of Spain" by Nick Lloyd and Sergi Garcia.

Contact: nick.iberianature@gmail.com





Ethos

Sad-Goods

Whenever I speak at conferences and other events, I am asked a series of questions about ethics and what it means for human-animal relations. These are actually two, quite different questions. The first asks what ethics is per se, and the second how ethics can be made practical in everyday life.

Perhaps the most common of the second, practical type of question concerns predation. 'Is predation moral? Is it right for one creature to kill another? How should I think and feel about the wolf that kills the deer or elk or moose? These are the kind of predation-related questions that advocates, citizens, policy-makers and scientists have asked me over the years.

While I have heard this questions often enough, until recently I do not think I took it as seriously as I should. I did not fully appreciate the moral weight it has for people: how it makes some hearts heavy and leaves other minds ill-at-ease.

I felt the weight, however, during a conference session on the ethics of wolf-human relations. A member of the audience noted that as much as we care about the well-being of wolves, we should also care about the well-being of the prey (e.g. deer, elk) and competitors (e.g. coyotes, dogs) whom wolves kill. This person wondered what guidance ethics gives for thinking about wolves killing other creatures? Is it right, or wrong, or something else? Damn good questions, and the resonance they had with the rest of the audience alerted me that something bigger than I had realised was at stake here.

Shortly thereafter, I was reading about the 'problem' of predation by a theologian and philosopher, respectively. They likened predation to vampirism, and suggested that

we take the wolf lying with the lamb (or was it the lion?) as a literal vision of how nature should work. You can read more about this imaginative interpretation in Andrew Linzey's book, *Animal Theology* (1994). The philosopher said we had a duty to minimise pain and suffering. Thus we should work towards the day when all predators like wolves are removed from the wild. Species like deer and elk would then be given birth control to manage their populations. You can read more about this brilliant idea in Steven Saponitz, *Morals, Reason and Animals* (1987).

A common response to all this is taught in science and philosophy courses. It is that predation is a non-problem. Animals are biological machines, functional units of an ecological process. They behave according to instinct, and are not capable of thinking or acting with moral (or immoral) ends in mind. Nature is what it is, and ethics has nothing to do with it. There is a certain truth in this line of thinking. We should not impose human norms on the creatures of the non-human world.

And yet if we take science seriously, we easily see that our understanding of nature is growing more complex each day. Complex enough to recognize the roots and even manifestation of what we call ethical behaviour in a wide variety of species (see Mark Bekoff, *Animal Passions and Beastly Virtues*, 2006). It turns out that some primates have a sense of justice, and elephants have elaborate bonds of mutuality and solidarity. So maybe this question about ethics and predation is not so easy to dismiss after all.

Over the years, the best answer about the ethics of predation that I have found comes from Holmes Rolston III. He says predation is a 'sad-good' (*Environmental Ethics*, 1988).

Instead of dismissing the subject of ethics and nature, Rolston peers into the natural world to see what lessons we may learn that will inform our ethical thinking. What he discovers is the value of predation in the natural world, something that does not detract from the respect we should have for individual animals.

For Rolston, predation is sad because it involves suffering and the taking of an individual's life. The prey of wolves such as deer and elk evolved to be both aware and self-aware. They are not only members of a population or species, they are individuals in-and-of themselves. Their behaviour in the face of being stalked or attacked certainly says something about how they value their lives, if only in a deeply felt and embodied way. It's a strange myopia of an outdated brand of science that would deny the sensibilities deer have about their own world. Thus when a wolf kills a fawn or runs down a straggler in a herd, a surplus animal has not been harvested (to use the agro-economic language of wildlife management). No, an individual life has been lost.

Even so, predation is good because it is a dynamic and indispensable part of nature. Predation is an evolved and ecologically necessary process, part of the trophic (feeding) structure of the biotic world, wherein plants, herbivores and carnivores literally pass-on energy derived from the sun and material derived from the earth. This is what the poet Gary Snyder meant when he describes Earth as a 'breathing planet in the sparkling whorls of living light' (*Turtle Island*, 1969). Predation is necessary for the well-being of predators and prey, as well as the ecological communities of which they are a part. It is an irrelevant brand of ethics that is willing to say what is right and wrong in nature without paying attention to the real circumstances of the natural world.

To return to the theologian and philosopher, we can now see where they both went wrong. Even though they have distinct worldviews (i.e. Anglican theology, philosophical utilitarianism), both of them fail to appreciate the good that comes from predation. All they see is the sad, and from there quickly move to pronouncing it morally bad.

For our theologian, it is the very intent to kill (either on the animal's part, or in Satan's plan to disrupt Eden) that makes predation so wrong. If I believed the story of Eden was literal and not figurative, I might consider this argument. I cannot take it literally, however, for it flies in the face of everything we know about nature – its biochemical genesis and evolution through the ages – much less the positive value of predation identified by Rolston. For our philosopher, it is the consequence of predation, its associated pain



Photo: Francisco Álvares

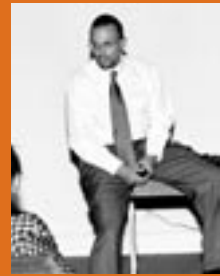
and suffering, which is so morally wrong. And yet if nature can be one of our landmarks in ethics, a literal place in which to situate our thinking and remain practical, then something else comes to light. It is not pain and suffering per se that is wrong, but unnatural pain and suffering. By ignoring the lessons of nature, our philosopher has missed this point.

What weighs most heavily on my heart are the abundant examples of pain and suffering rooted in questionable human actions. Leg-hold traps that animals sometime chew off to escape. Competitions to kill the most coyotes in a single day. The poaching of gorillas and chimpanzees in the bush-meat trade. The capture and sometimes brutal 'training' of wild Asian elephants. The widespread practice of poisoning of wolves out of fear, greed or competition. This is pain and suffering with no natural analogue. And here too we find another connection between ethics and predation. It is not only what we can learn from nature about the how and why of predation. It is taking ethical responsibility for

our own predatory actions towards animals and the natural world. When people ask about the ethics of predation, I suspect what weighs most heavily on their hearts is the lack of ethical regard people show towards humans and other animals.

Finally, a word of praise for the people who have asked me this question over the years. I think I understand it better now, and I am sorry if I misunderstood you in the past. Implicit in your questions was an appreciation for the well-being of wolves and their prey, both as individuals and as a species. Few of you arbitrarily chose the well-being of an animal over nature (or vis-a-versa). This exemplifies the search for a creative middle ground where the well-being of both might be preserved. Yours was a sensibility very close to Rolston's insight about sad-goods, a rule-of-thumb to help us place our feet on the right patch of ground. And that is a fine example of your own practical ethics at work.

Cheers, Bill



Bill Lynn is the founder and Senior Ethics Advisor of Practical Ethics (www.practicaethics.net), and a professor at the Center for Animals and Public Policy at Tufts University (www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa). If you have a question you would like to address to Bill, or a comment on Ethos, please write him at williamlynn@practicaethics.net.

Death of an Ambassador

On Tuesday, July 11 2006, Lucas, one of the International Wolf Center's ambassador wolves, was euthanized at the Center in Ely, Minnesota. After several days of observation and consultation by wolf care staff and area veterinarians, it was determined Lucas would not recover from a chronic, degenerative spinal condition and other age-related issues. Lucas was 13 years old. Wolves in the wild may live eight to ten years. Captive wolves sometimes live as long as 14 to 16 years.

Lucas had been with the Center since he was ten days old, and it was noticed that he was having difficulty standing on June 24. Several treatments were attempted and while Lucas had some individual days of improvement, his overall decline continued despite treatment. It was determined that euthanization was the most humane course of action.

Lucas educated and entertained some 600,000 visitors during his life, and was known as a calm wolf with relatively nonaggressive behaviour. In 2002, he and his littermates, Mackenzie and Lakota, were moved into a retirement enclosure, separated from the Exhibit Pack.

On a personal note, I was lucky enough to visit the Centre whilst Lucas and the rest of the Ambassador Pack members were still in the public enclosure, and spent many happy hours watching them all through the glass – and occasionally being observed by them too! Farewell, Lucas, I'm glad we met.

You can find out more on-line at www.wolf.org, including logs about all the wolves, and how to donate to the memorial fund.

Chris Senior



Photo: Chris Senior



Wolves in Germany: A gift?

*by Chris Senior
Based on source material
supplied by Oliver Matla
Photos by Oliver Matla*

This article is based on the fascinating and in-depth presentation given by Oliver Matla at the Trust's spring seminar, 'Wolves in Germany; the future, the present and the past'. This presentation included data provided by LUPUS Wildlife Consulting, Ilka Reinhardt, Gesa Kluth, Mammal Research Institute, Polish Academy of Sciences and W_odzimirz J_drzejewski. More information can be found at the German Wolf Association (in English): <http://www.wolves.de/index.php?lang=e>. Remember that the autumn seminar is on October 22nd; see <http://www.ukwolf.org/uk-wolf/seminars/> for details and a booking form.

One thousand year war

Wolves were once native inhabitants of Germany, along with the rest of Europe, but the move away from hunting and gathering during the Neolithic period saw the beginnings of conflict with these animals. Systematic eradication did not begin until the early Middle Ages, and in Germany, the first organized wolf hunts appear in the year 813 for the first time, when Emperor Karl the Great ordered the Earls to appoint two officers each exclusively responsible for wolf hunting, known as *Luparii*. These officers were held in high regard, they reported directly to the emperor and received free hospitality and accommodation wherever they went. The wolf hunts were later accompanied by

aristocrats and became high society events, marking the start of 1,000 years of war against wolves.

Inventive methods devised for killing the wolf included: nets; dogs; spears thrown from horseback; maze traps where the wolf negotiated a constructed maze to get at the bait, and could not then find its way out; bear traps designed to trap the wolf's neck; and the particularly imaginatively barbaric wolf hook, which was a baited metal hook thrown over a tree branch, and designed to pierce the muzzle of any wolf attempting to eat the bait, leaving the wolf hanging there until it bled to death.

As in any war, propaganda presented a distorted picture of the wolf, as illustrated by the Beast of Gévaudan from France, a fearsome-looking beast depicted as an amalgam of deadly body-parts capable of leaping almost ten metres. Other propaganda presented the wolf variously as a beast which would kill all those who opposed it when it attacked villages; exaggerated its size and numbers; and made the wolf synonymous with evil in religious parables, such as a depiction of Christ defending a sheep by stabbing a wolf. Its negative image in fairy tales such as Little Red Riding Hood persists even to this day.

Despite all this, the wolf survived persecution, even once the hunting privileges of aristocrats were abolished in the 19th century, allowing anyone to hunt, and wiping out red deer as a source of prey throughout Germany. Slowly, the wolf vanished from each German state, the last recorded kills ranging between 1820 and 1906 amongst these, although the wolf was effectively extinct long before these dates.

Wolves occupy German military base

In more recent times, wolves recovered in southeast Poland – the Carpathians – during the First World War, but later persecution



An historic illustration from 1655 of a wolf hunt.



Some heathland in succession at the western part of the military area, where the Neustadt Heath pack is roaming.

during the 1930s prevented them reaching western parts adjoining Germany. The Second World War allowed further recovery of numbers, and a move into western Poland, but bounties paid by this country in 1955 caused a dramatic decline in the population, and by the 1960s, wolves were once again absent from western Poland, although still holding out in the east.

In neighbouring Germany, at least nine wolves were shot between 1948 and 1961, having successfully, if briefly, crossed from Poland. During the 1970s, Poland banned the use of poison and traps, and introduced a closed season for hunting, which allowed the country's population of less than 100 individuals to recover, and today, the population is 600 individuals in 120 packs. Still not the 1,000 estimated population of the early 1950s, but much improved.

Unfortunately, any wolves crossing to Germany from Poland between 1979 and the German Reunification of 1989 were immediately shot, but then in 1996, wolves were first sighted on a military training ground in the Oberlausitz region of Saxony (close to the Polish border), and again in 1998. The first documented litter of four pups was born in 2000, giving rise to Germany's first wild wolf pack for some time, the Muskau Heath pack, which was joined by two more pups the following year. 2002 saw 33 sheep killed by the wolves, and also three more wolf pups born. Dispersal of the 2000 pups led to the formation of a new pack to the west in 2003, known as the Neustadt Heath pack, and this new pack produced a litter of wolf-dog hybrids that year (four survived; two were

captured; two disappeared), whilst the original pack produced five further pups.

The year 2004 saw one of the surviving hybrids die, whilst the original pack produced two further pups, along with five pups to each pack in 2005: Wolves are definitely thriving

here, and have been dispersing from both packs since 2002, leading to sightings reported in 2006 of two wolves in areas to the south, and at least one wolf to the north of the 700 km² territories occupied by these original two colonising packs.

Quiet, secluded neighbourhood, close to the stores

The military training area occupied by the Muskau Heath pack is typified by birch heathland on sandy soils, whilst the Neustadt Heath pack has more coniferous forest cover, becoming quite dense in areas, but also having areas of open heathland. The dry, sandy soils reveal tracks where wolves have passed, as well as the prints of their prey:

Roe deer forms almost half of their diet, with wild boar and red deer making up the majority of the remainder: This is in approximate proportion to the density of these three prey species per square kilometre in the wolves' territory. Rabbits, rodents, mouflon (European wild sheep, found in Corsica and Sardinia, and introduced to Germany around 1900 to be hunted), livestock, birds and fish, whilst not widely represented, show that these wolves are adapted to a wide prey-base.

Utilising an area controlled by the military also means that the wolves are less to be disturbed by humans, as access to the area is strictly controlled.

Hands up, who wants wolves?

The regional government sees the presence of wolves as a 'gift for Saxony', which will help attract industry to the area, whilst the federal government is in agreement, and will not intervene in the regional management of this issue. The Federal Forestry Office echoes this welcome of wolves, seeing them as indicators



An hybrid taken in the Bavarian Forest National Park. Photo by Jürgen Ratmann.



The pack is living on a former surface mining area which is now part of the military area. This picture is showing the Lohsa II reservoir. BTW, the water of the sea has a pH-value of 2.8.

of healthy forests, whilst acknowledging that there will also be associated problems to be solved by their presence.

Hunters are not unanimous in their views, with older ones distrustful of wolves, and perceiving them as a threat to children, which they feel the government should deal with. Younger hunters are often more tolerant, viewing wolves as a natural component of the ecosystem. However, location is also a factor,

with hunters in wolf areas, and in the east as a whole, more sceptical of having wolves back.

Sheepgrowers (surprise, surprise) are not in favour of wolves, and the same conspiracy theory of deliberate wolf reintroduction has been voiced, as happened in France (see *Wolves in France*, Wolf Print issue 27). There are also feelings of despair, along with reluctant acceptance of the situation within this group: This is similar to the views

expressed by livestock farmers in most regions or countries that have seen the return of the wolf after a long absence.

Amongst the general public, 49% are in favour of the return of all extirpated predators, but 30% of Germans object to the return of wolves and bears, citing danger to humans and 'economic damage' as the two main reasons. Additionally, 38% would be afraid when they encountered a wolf in the woods (they were not told the probability of this actually happening, and would have drawn on their own images of wolves, which may have been formed by tales such as Little Red Riding Hood), and 30% do not think that there is sufficient suitable habitat for predators (unlike Wolf Print readers, who will doubtless know that the wolf can thrive almost anywhere, given sufficient prey).

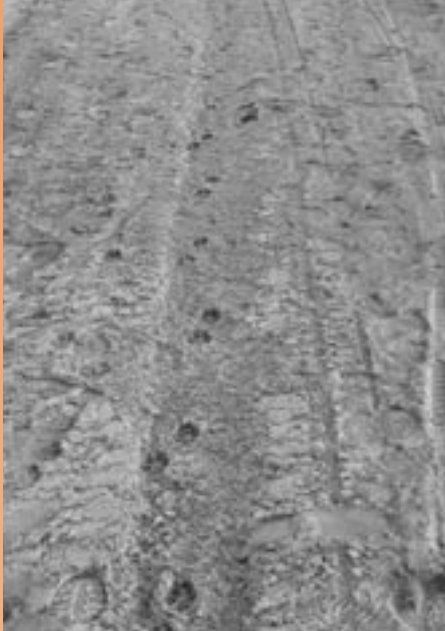
There is the usual pro-wolf bias from those in urban areas, who would not be in close proximity to the animal, whilst those in the countryside would fear to be in the woods where wolves were known to be around, and some parents even started escorting their children to school when wolves were first known to have returned. According to this 2005 survey, mothers, both urban and rural, object strongly to the presence of wolves, showing how the myths and legends concerning these creatures have coloured our views down the years.

Although attitudes are changing, as actual behaviour replaces fictional fears, the killing of livestock still causes tension, and provides an opportunity for the tabloid press to trot out old wolf-clichés to play on peoples' fears:

- a headline of 'bad wolf killed 20 sheep' is accompanied by a large photo of a snarling wolf with bared teeth: Previously, the press used photos of wolves yawning, as this also shows their teeth!;
- another translates to 'Lausitz wolf kills cute lamb', which was the pet of two young children (again with snarling wolf photo). It



Map of the location of wolf packs in Saxony.



Single-file wolf tracks by the alpha female of the Neustadt Heath Pack.

turns out that the attacker was actually a fox, and the lamb was due to be slaughtered for an Easter celebration anyway: Convenient for the parents to have a wolf to blame, perhaps, and helping to continue the cycle of hatred to a new generation;

- a third article ponders whether the Lausitz wolves will snatch babies from the forest (all of these read almost like the Middle Ages hysteria against wolves, likening them to the devil and accusing them of all manner of misdeeds).

The other media are more objective, and have come out mostly in favour of the wolf, and even a magazine for hunters is surprisingly unbiased regarding the subject.

An organisation known as The Association for Security and Species Protection is an anti-wolf association founded in 2004, whose



Same, close up.

members are drawn from the ranks of hunters, sheepgrowers, the tourist sector and private citizens. Their aim is to ensure that no children ever get attacked or killed by wolves, by reducing the wolf population to three or

four individuals! They achieved some short-term publicity by taking legal action to demand a wolf be shot (no reason given; case dismissed), and suggested fencing in the entire military site: It became obvious that they had no idea what they were talking about, and interest in them quickly subsided, the hunting association having already disassociated itself from this group. The positive side of this was that two new pro-wolf organisations were founded as a result.

Counting the sheep

The presence of wolves near to livestock inevitably means some losses, as the long absence of wolves has led to less guarded methods of sheep farming: The leap from April/May 1998, with seven sheep killed, to April/May 2002, where 18 were killed, nine vanished and six were euthanized due to wolves, is large. Nevertheless, this can be reduced, such as using a better specification of electric fencing which is both taller and more robust, to keep wolves away from flocks.

In other instances, it is not only poor fencing has contributed to sheep and lambs being killed, as in some instances, fields with a river bordering one side have not had this approach fenced, as it was felt that wolves would not cross the water. They did.

Further problems for the travelling wolf

The wolves of Germany have other problems to overcome, as do other extirpated native predators hoping to make a comeback.

A major issue is movement, both getting *into* Germany to recolonise, and then being able to move *within* the country, once they have settled there. Data from Poland show that wolves travel along migration corridors



Deer are abundant: Deer scat at the eastern part of the military area (Muskau Heath Pack).



An old tank as target for target practice right in wolf country.

from the main areas they have settled in, but the presence of highways can cause problems, as these can present barriers to dispersal. Some new routes, such as the planned Via Baltica, present not just danger from vehicles, but are reshaping the landscape with cuts and bankings, creating wide corridors, often fenced, which are all but impassable to animals: The wolf population of western Poland is still relatively small, and it may become increasingly difficult for individuals to disperse from the east, and hence into other parts of Germany.

One solution is to utilise *green bridges* as part of the highway construction: These are wide bridges, landscaped with soil, plants and trees, which present a much more 'natural' environment for the animals to cross over the roads (these, of course, add to the cost of construction, but could easily be justified by a comprehensive environmental impact assessment). Unfortunately, a proposal by Oliver in 2002 to assess the need for green bridges in Germany was rejected vehemently, as others felt that there was no need for such wildlife passages.

If the wolf habitats are allowed to become fragmented, this can contribute to lack of diversity within the wolf population, leading to inbreeding phenomena. Amongst other things, this can decrease litter sizes and increase sterility, allow hereditary diseases to accumulate, and result in birth defects. A smaller, isolated population is also more at risk from the loss of individual animals.



The eastern part of the military area. Heathland in front, large coniferous forests in the back.

All up to date

This presentation, albeit with the usual tales of woe concerning the way that the wolf has been treated in the past, shows that the future for the wolf in Germany could be a good one, with support from both the regional and federal government, many individuals, much of the media, and even some of the hunters. There is also some opposition, but less than can be seen in many countries in the similar position of accommodating carnivores which they are no longer used to having in the wild, and education to replace myth with fact is a key process in generating further acceptance of wild wolves amongst all groups involved.

The wolves are obviously doing well in the relatively undisturbed sanctuary of the military area, with abundant prey. Despite some losses of sheep, the process for reducing these has already commenced, and can hopefully be used to keep future losses to a minimum.

There is also the issue facing many countries; a road infrastructure which can potentially fragment habitats and populations, but this too can be overcome from a technical standpoint, if political will is present. The fact that Steffen Flath, minister of state for Saxony, sees the wolves as a 'gift' for the area is surely a very positive one, and may help to smooth the way for the return of wolves to other parts of Germany in the future.

The final piece of news, to bring the story up to date, is that both packs have again had pups, around the second week of May, 2006, although the numbers of pups have not been confirmed yet.

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