

**W**olves have always been a main character in the drama of human existence. Few animals have figured so prominently in human history as the wolf. It is both admired and hated — in fact, there is not much in-between. We have exterminated populations and recovered populations — the human race's oldest love-hate relationship. Both the wonderful qualities of the wolf and the sinister intent have been greatly exaggerated by lovers and haters on both sides of the issue. The famous wolf expert, L. David Mech, recently said that

the idea that bringing back wolves will magically transform the natural world into paradise and bring back the beavers, birds and butterflies is more religion than science. However, he was quick to add that the idea wolves will kill off all of the big game is just as much religion as the wonderful paradise fable.

With the bombardment of wolf stories in the news these days, it is difficult to understand what is fable and what is real. Everyone seems to have science on their side and it is nearly impossible to stay on top of it all and to sort out who is using science to form opinions and who is using their opinions to form

**WITH SO MANY  
SPECIAL INTEREST  
GROUPS PLAYING  
TUG-OF-WAR, CAN  
STATES BE TRUSTED  
WITH WOLF  
MANAGEMENT?**

# WOLF WARS



# SO YOU KILL 7 TYPES OF BACTERIA? COOL STORY BRO

KILLING BACTERIA IS NOT ENOUGH.  
DEAD DOWN WIND KILLS THE ODORS THAT ACTUALLY  
MATTER, AT THE MOLECULAR LEVEL.



## DON'T BRAG ABOUT A JOB YOU CAN'T FINISH.

KILLING BACTERIA IS NOT KILLING ODOR. BACTERIA  
RELEASE THE CHEMICALS THAT CAUSE ODOR, WHICH  
MEANS WHEN THEY'RE GONE, THE STINK REMAINS. DEAD  
DOWN WIND'S SKIN-SAFE FORMULA IS PACKED WITH  
NATURAL ENZYMES THAT ANNIHILATE ODOR MOLECULES

FOR IMMEDIATE, AND LASTING, SCENT CONTROL.

**DON'T JUST START THE JOB. FINISH IT...WITH DEAD DOWN WIND.**



DEADDOWNWIND.COM

their "science." Let there be no doubt, the wolf is on its way back and so we will be well-served to understand as much as possible about this species and all of the biological and social issues that come along with it. With wolves more than any species, we must understand the past and present if we are to successfully navigate a future coexistence with them.

### TODAY'S WOLF

The wolf once had the largest distribution of any land mammal in the world. Although its range is much reduced, wolves still occur in at least 46 countries worldwide. Outside of North America, there are at least 110,000 wolves living in wild populations, with nearly all listed as stable or increasing due to improved conservation efforts. Only in India, China and a couple of European countries are they thought to be decreasing in number. Wolf numbers are stable or increasing in North America as well. Canada and Alaska are home to about 65,000 wolves and the Lower 48 has fully recovered the gray wolf in the northern Rocky Mountains (at least 1,782 wolves +200 in Oregon and Washington state) and Western Great Lakes region (4,399 wolves today). If you read the fundraising emails of environmental groups, you'd think wolves were endangered. The fact is, wolves are thriving in most places. The Mexican wolf in the Southwest (about 140 in the wild) and the red wolf in the Southeast (50 in the wild) are still working toward recovery.

### THE THROES OF RECOVERY

Until recently, wolves fell under the legal requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The purpose of the ESA is to keep species from becoming extinct. It is not supposed to be a tool to simply protect animals we like from ever being hunted. Unfortunately, there are some groups and individuals who see the ESA as just that tool.

One requirement of the ESA is that a recovery plan must be developed for species listed as endangered; that plan outlines how this animal will be saved from extinction. These recovery plans must have "recovery criteria" that clearly outline thresholds that define when the animal can be considered no longer in danger of

extinction. When a species reaches those criteria, it is taken off the list and the management is turned over to the state wildlife agencies to manage just as they do hundreds of other species they have responsibility for. The ESA is supposed to be like an Intensive Care Unit, where the patients are placed there just long enough to make sure they don't die, and then their care is turned over to the hospital or their primary care physician for maintenance. The ESA was never meant to be a nursing home where the patient stays forever. The recovery criteria have to be

objective, achievable and measurable so it is clear when they are reached and everyone can agree it's time to turn their care over to the state wildlife agencies. Unfortunately, many recovery plans do not have clear criteria and this allows those with a nursing home mentality to go to the courts and get a judge to rule they're not out of the woods yet. Lawyers for protectionist groups love vague recovery criteria because it makes it easy to argue with twisted logic and get a judge to agree the criteria have not been reached.

#### ON AGAIN, OFF AGAIN

For the most part, wolves are doing very well in most places where available habitat exists across North America. Wolf populations are increasing and spreading to new areas. The Mexican wolf needs more time to recover. Red wolf recovery has a lot of challenges and they might never be recovered. The natural ability of wolves to not only survive, but for their numbers to grow has been greatly enhanced by our recovery of their prey.

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation has brought back the wolf's prey to abundance and even over-abundance. That fact, along with modern wildlife regulations and a general conservation ethic among the public, has driven this recovery of the wolf. Even though wolf recovery is biologically

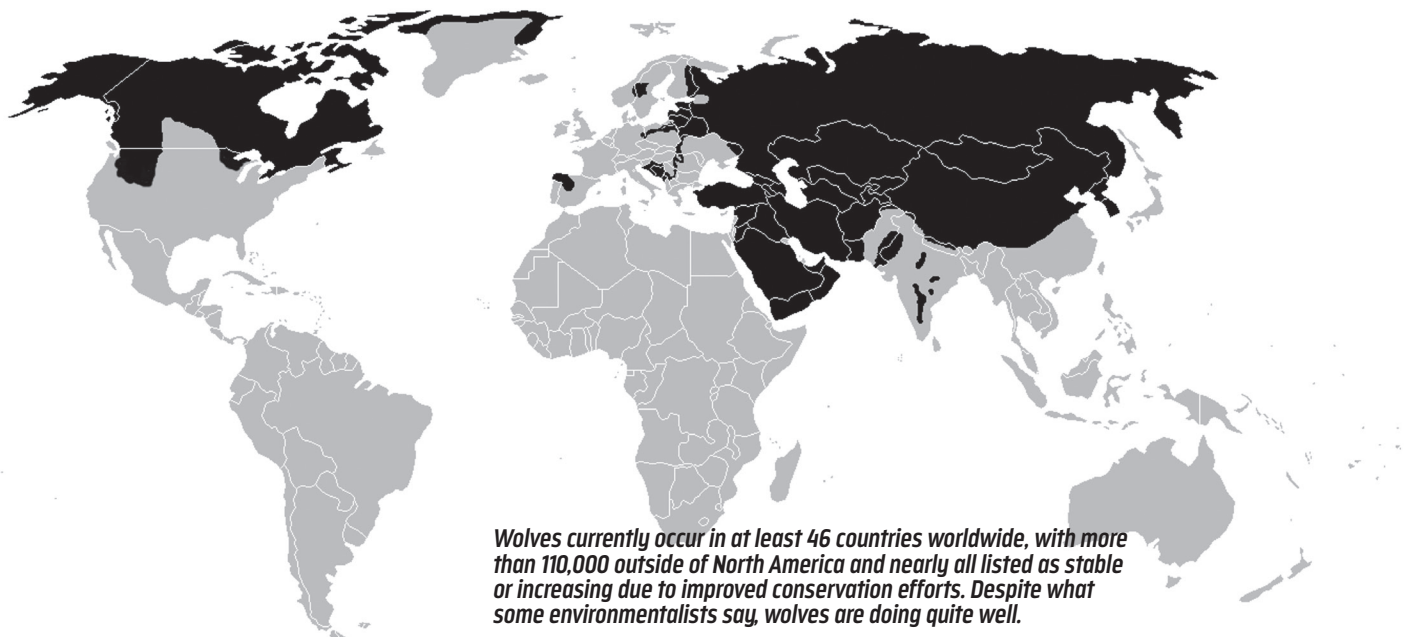
fairly easy, there is constant pressure by some to make sure wolves are never hunted. This protection is not rooted in biological or ecological reasons, but in a personal distaste for hunting in general and wolf hunting in particular. Some in academia hold this view and spend huge amounts of time thinking of ways to attack state agencies and create innovative ways to justify their feelings that wolves should be protected as endangered species in perpetuity.

The recovery plan for wolves in the northern Rockies said they would be taken off the endangered species list when three populations of 100 wolves each was reached. That goal was later increased to three populations of 150 wolves each. Criteria were met to allow wolves to be down listed from endangered to threatened in 2003. A series of lawsuits from protectionist groups see-sawed their status back to the endangered list in 2005, delisted in 2008, relisted later that year, delisted again in 2009, relisted in 2010, delisted in 2011 in Idaho and Montana, then Wyoming was delisted in 2012, only to be then relisted in 2014 before being delisted again in 2017. Whew! A classic tug-of-war between biology and emotions.

By the time they were taken off the endangered species list in 2012, there were reportedly 1,774 wolves living in the wild in three genetically connected populations! The Northern gray wolf is clearly no longer in



*Wolves have figured prominently in human history and culture throughout time — often in an unfavorable light.*



*Wolves currently occur in at least 46 countries worldwide, with more than 110,000 outside of North America and nearly all listed as stable or increasing due to improved conservation efforts. Despite what some environmentalists say, wolves are doing quite well.*

danger of extinction, but that does not stop the attacks on common sense wildlife management. These wolves are now appropriately managed by the state wildlife agencies along with other native wildlife species that have been recovered from low population levels. Limited and regulated hunting seasons for wolves are offered to manage them within the limits of their prey base and social tolerance, while maintaining their populations far in excess of what would put them in danger of extinction.

### GREAT LAKES RECOVERY PLAN

Although the circus in the northern Rockies is probably not behind us, the real focus in the coming decade will be the wolves in the Western Great Lakes area (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan). The 1992 recovery plan for this area defined "recovery" as 1,251 to 1,400 wolves in Minnesota and 100 more in Wisconsin and Michigan combined.

Minnesota held the only wild wolf population in the Lower 48 states when they were first protected by the Endangered Species Act in 1974. This population of 1,000 wolves expanded and grew to more than 4,000 wolves in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan by 2011. At that time, they exceeded recovery goals for more than five years and were obviously no longer in danger of extinction. Wolves in this region were removed

from the Endangered Species List in 2007 when there were 2,921 wolves in Minnesota and another 1,469 in Wisconsin and Michigan combined. Yet, they were ordered by the courts to be relisted the next year for procedural reasons and were not delisted again until 2012, when there were more than 4,400 wolves in those three states and had exceeded recovery goals for a decade.

Each state agency has a state wolf management plan that has been approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (as required before they were taken off the Endangered Species List). As part of these plans, wolf hunting was allowed in all three states, with a total of 429 wolves harvested in 2013 seasons in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan. Overall harvest in this population was less than 12 percent of the population at the time. Still, wolf advocacy groups and advocacy academics continued to argue that this population was still in danger of becoming extinct!

In December 2014, the Humane Society of the United States and its advocacy "experts" succeeded in getting wolves in the Western Great Lakes again protected by the ESA by being listed as threatened in Minnesota and endangered in the other two states. Despite ridiculous allegations that these wolves are still in danger of extinction, there are now about 4,400 wolves in these three states (2,856/

Minnesota, 925/Wisconsin and 618/ Michigan) and the population seems to be stabilizing at current levels.

Some of the wolf activists continue to argue that there still are not enough wolves and that state agency wolf management (primarily by hunting) will "exterminate" wolf populations and cause them to become endangered again. You won't hear that kind of hysteria from knowledgeable biologists, but they are not the ones all over social media these days. It is not easy to reduce a wild, free ranging wolf population, especially in areas dominated by remote wilderness or National Parks. There is no record a wolf population numbering 100 or more wolves being exterminated by regulated hunting at sustainable levels. In fact, states do not authorize public wolf harvests until many hundreds of wolves exist on the landscape.

Unfortunately, many environmental groups seem more interested in making money than in joining hunters in this great system of wildlife conservation. Misinformed and gullible people sit at home and write checks to these groups thinking they are on the right side of conservation. Wolves have been lucrative fund-raising tools for many groups as they plead for the public to "help us protect the wolf." Randy Newberg of Leupold's Fresh Tracks TV show is fond of saying that wolves are not canines, they are bovines because they are a cash cow for environmental groups.

### FALLING INTO THE STATES' HANDS

We brought Northern gray wolves from endangered status to game animal in a little more than two decades. The fact is, wolves are simply another native North American species that has been brought back from near extinction, such as the pronghorn and bighorn sheep and even the white-tailed deer in some areas. The abundant game herds restored by sportsmen are actually the reason wolf lovers can have wolves restored to so many areas and be maintained at sustainable levels.

Hunters should be proud of their part in wolf recovery, but we cannot allow wolves to damage what we have worked so hard to establish and maintain for more than 80 years. We



*In 1995, wolves were released in Yellowstone National Park and in Idaho. These releases, plus some wolves naturally moving in from Canada, resulted in more than 1,700 wolves in the northern Rocky Mountain states.*



have to get the management of wolves into state wildlife agency hands as soon as they are no longer in danger of extinction. This is the stated intent of the Endangered Species Act, but some people don't like the idea of wolves being hunted so much that they will fight with all their might (and money) to keep wolves listed as endangered species forever.

Not only are there protectionist groups fighting against treating wolves like all other restored native wildlife, but there are a few academics who are actively campaigning to assure no wolf ever dies at the hands of man. Poorly designed research in Wisconsin purportedly found that removing problem wolves and allowing hunting does not increase public acceptance of wolves on the landscape. This doesn't make sense, and so it should come as no surprise that three independent teams of scientists have published rebuttals of that work saying it is "based on flawed analysis and unconvincing interpretation of scientific literature."

Protectionist groups and protectionist professors alike have no responsibilities to the public; they are free to manipulate data and spread misinformation in their quest to protect each individual wolf at all costs and try to discredit the most successful system of wildlife conservation in the history of mankind. They can clamor loudly for actions that inflame and negatively impact large segments of society. State wildlife agencies, however, have to listen to all residents and strike a balance between constantly competing interests and opinions. Professionals have to stand by and defend their decisions as being the best course of action for all residents, not just the squeakiest wheel.

Recovery does not require as much biological knowledge as it does sociological knowledge; we must compensate owners for livestock and dog killings and also find ways to minimize these conflicts when we can. It is common sense that we also need



*Despite what some environmental groups would like you to believe, wolves are doing quite well in North America and most of the world, with 58,000- 67,000 in Canada and Alaska alone.*

to manage predators as we manage prey species.

Wolves are easy to manage — biologically. In the Midwest, if we just keep road density minimized, limit illegal killings, and protect den sites from disturbance, then wolves will thrive on abundant native prey. In agricultural areas and mixed forest or farmland they will inevitably get into trouble and require more intensive management, but this is not a dereliction of agency responsibilities, just the reality of wolf coexistence.

When wolves in the Western Great Lakes are again delisted, the state wildlife agencies will continue protection and wolves will continue to expand into available habitat (they are mostly there already). Agencies will continue to work with federal agency partners to implement the protections set forth in the recovery plan and state management plans.

On today's settled and working landscapes, wolves are not going to be able to perform the same task as an apex predator as occurs in wild lands and wilderness areas. Wolf numbers will need to be controlled in areas devoted to livestock operations, human activities, and occasionally areas important to big game hunting. We can make room for the wolf, but state wolf management plans must assure that managers can actually manage local wolf populations. Sound science and good conservation has to prevail over environmental advocacy

and misguided protection.

What many wolf advocates don't seem to realize is that changing wolf protection from endangered species to being protected as a game species is the most obvious proof of success, not failure. What person would not rejoice at being released from the Intensive Care Unit because their condition had improved so much it was no longer needed? L. David Mech said more than two decades ago that if wolf advocates could accept management by hunters, we could have more wolves in far more places.

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