



Barrett Hedges/National Geographic Image Collection

“Our small business is among a growing number of businesses that cater specifically to...wolf watchers. We offer programs throughout the year that utilize Montana businesses where we use local transportation (including airlines), hotel accommodations, outdoor stores, gift shops, and restaurants...Our business has grown during the recession, which indicates the wolf industry is growing and thriving.

--Nathan Varley, Co-owner of The Wild Side, LLC



NPS

Keep Gray Wolves Protected for All Americans Oppose H.R. 843, H.R. 884, H.R. 1985, and any wolf delisting riders

Instead of caring for her pups and keeping her family unit tight, wolf 832F lay dying in the snow. The hunter’s bullet that killed “the most famous wolf in the world” pierced her as she made a rare foray outside of Yellowstone National Park. Her death in 2012 sparked outrage among Americans and was covered by mainstream news organizations such as ABC and NPR.

The gray wolf is an iconic emblem of freedom, the great outdoors, and the spirit of the American wilderness. Wolves drive tourism and economic gains while promoting and sustaining healthy ecosystems. By the early 20th century, wolves had been pushed to the brink of extinction, but conservation efforts have helped them stabilize. However, there have been repeated attempts to revoke important Endangered Species Act protections. If we’re not careful, we run the risk of wiping out wolves in our country, losing out on the benefits they bring, and only seeing them behind the plate glass window of a zoo.

AMERICANS CARE ABOUT WOLVES

“As an avid and passionate hunter in Montana...I am absolutely disgusted that no hunter-based conservation organizations...are speaking out against this slaughter which is a clear violation of the North American model of wildlife management.” – David Stalling, hunter and outdoor writer, on Idaho’s wolf killing

Studies and voting records show that Americans want wolves conserved for their children and their children’s children. In November, Michigan voters rejected two wolf hunting laws with 55% and 64% of the vote. A recent survey of 9,000 mostly rural Wisconsin residents found that 65% of those living in wolf ranges want the wolf population maintained or increased. In the past few years, millions of people have called on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect and conserve wolves. Removing federal protections for wolves goes against what American people have demanded, time and time again.

WOLVES DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

“My business has increased yearly...I came here because I watch wildlife and that’s what a lot of my clients do...We had our best November and best October ever last fall [2010], that would be people coming to see the wildlife. They are coming for the wolves and they are coming for the bears.” –Gerlie Weinstein, owner of Alpine Motel in Cooke City, MT

Many local economies are supported by small businesses that rely on wolf-watching tourism. Wildlife watchers flock to wolf habitats to catch a glimpse of a wolf or hear their multi-pitched songs. A 2006 study of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming found that wolf presence in the Yellowstone ecosystem created a \$35.5 million annual revenue stream. One outdoor educator estimates that wolf watching brings in four times more money than hunting. In the Great Lakes region, the International Wolf Center (IWC), an educational facility in Ely, MN, brings in as much as \$3 million annually and creates up to 66 jobs. About half of Ely’s visitors say the presence of the IWC influenced their decision to visit.



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A FAMILY-FOCUSED WOLF PACK

- Wolves pair for life and raise their young through extended family groups, which they need to survive
- Generally only the alpha pair, the top animals of the pack, breed. They and the other pack members take care of the pups
- Wolves are social and territorial. Pack size is generally 2-15 animals and can consist of up to 4 generations of grown offspring
- Capturing fleet-footed prey such as elk is a difficult task even with an entire pack. As a result, most prey chases end in failure
- Survival, even in un hunted populations, is not easy. They always face the threat of starvation, disease, or strife from nearby packs. But where they are hunted, the biggest killer of wolves is humans

KILLING WOLVES CAN RESULT IN MORE LIVESTOCK LOSSES

"[Killing alpha members is killing] the animals that keep everyone else in line. You've got no brakes anymore." —Rob Wielgus, wildlife biologist

More than 99% of unwanted livestock losses come from respiratory, digestive, or birthing diseases; injury; theft; and weather events, such as snow, fire, or lightning. U.S. Department of Agriculture's data show that wolves (and all other carnivores combined, including coyotes, cougars, and bears) cause less than 1% of all annual livestock losses.

A 2014 study from the University of Washington, using a 25-year data set, found that indiscriminate wolf killing actually increased livestock losses due to wolves in the following year. Researchers think this is because killing an alpha wolf can cause the family unit to break up, creating more breeding pairs and more pups to feed. These new wolf packs are often less-experienced and livestock become easy prey. Nonlethal methods such as fence flagging and carcass removal are proven ways to decrease livestock losses.

WOLVES BALANCE ECOSYSTEMS

"It is like kicking a pebble down a mountain slope where conditions were just right that a falling pebble could trigger an avalanche of change." —Doug Smith, wildlife biologist

Wolves make their ecosystems abundant, diverse, healthy, and varied. In Yellowstone National Park, where wolves force once-sedentary elk herds to move, biologists documented major ecosystem changes and an enormous increase in the number of other species, from amphibians to fish, songbirds, moose, pronghorn, and lynx. Moreover, browsing elk no longer suppress aspen, cottonwood, and willow communities, allowing vital river ecosystems to be restored and serve as home to hundreds of species. Wolves' presence even increases the soil nutrients due to the decomposing carcasses left by the wolves. The remains of wolf kills help populations of rare species such as bald and golden eagles and grizzly bears that scavenge wolf kills.

WOLF NUMBERS ARE SET BY THEIR PREY

"Wolves hunt an elk population. That [hunting pressure] doesn't always affect individual animals." —Arthur Middleton, researcher, Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit

In food webs, the numbers of prey determine the number of predators. Studies show hunters have far greater effects on ungulate (e.g., deer, elk, and moose) populations than wolves. In fact, wolves take the oldest and weakest animals, improving the health of the herd and staving off death by slow starvation if the herd grows too large.

CONSERVE AND MANAGE WOLVES FOR ALL AMERICANS

Wolves certainly cannot survive human persecution as history has repeatedly shown us. We nearly snuffed the gray wolf from the planet once. We brought them back from their brush with extinction over several decades spending millions of dollars. Biologists have learned so much about wolves and their import just since the mid-1990s. We must keep gray wolves protected and properly managed for all Americans.

