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WolfPrint

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WolfPrint

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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



The past year has been a hectic one. The UK Wolf Conservation Trust has celebrated its 10th anniversary, and the work we do steadily increases. We have attended a much greater number of events, hosted two successful seminars, had thousands of people visit the Trust and have continued our development of the Centre. Each year there are a number of wolf conferences throughout the world. I had the great pleasure of attending the International Wolf Centre's conference in Colorado Springs in October. As well as getting down to the serious business of wolf conservation, there is also plenty of time for socialising, and it was great fun catching up with friends old and new. You will find a brief report on the conference on Page 14. For further information, check the IWC website at www.wolf.org.

One of our regular contributors, Sue Sefcik, has written a fascinating piece on the Falkland Islands wolf. Unfortunately, the demise of this species is the usual depressing picture of humans hunting this particular creature until it became extinct. And it is sad that we should still need to be reminded about the effects of our actions even today.

One of the UKWCT's volunteers, Dominic Earl, recently visited Alladale Lodge in Scotland. There has been a lot of press and media activity surrounding this project recently, and we will continue to monitor the progress. The plans for a large fenced reserve (approximately 60,000 acres), which will house large predators are very ambitious, and there are a number of obstacles to overcome before any of the plans become reality. One thing this project has done is to stir up the debate about wolf reintroduction once more. This is a topic that volunteers at the UKWCT continually get asked about.

Bilal Habib, a PhD candidate working under the supervision of Satish Kumar, has written a background article on the wolves in India. Wolf conservation in India is a fascinating and highly complex subject, and one we will be returning to. I hope to publish more in-depth articles in the near future.

October was a busy month with conferences and festivals running back to back. The UKWCT attended an eco-arts festival called Inspired by Nature which was held at Arley Hall in Cheshire on 8th and 9th October. Duma and Dakota were the ambassadorial wolves for that particular weekend, and as usual they were one of the biggest crowd pullers. Two of the Trust's senior team also prepared and delivered a highly entertaining seminar on the Lost Beasts of Britain, which as well as highlighting the species we no longer have in the British Isles, also explained the impact this has had on our modern landscapes. The reintroduction of species is then the natural progression of this line of thought, and a topic that provokes a lot of debate whenever it is raised. Further details and photographs of the festival can be found at www.education4conservation.org.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Wolf Print. We welcome your comments and suggestions, and in particular I would like to hear from readers who have opinions about the situation that is unfolding in Scotland not only with the Alladale project, but also on the topic of reintroductions in general.

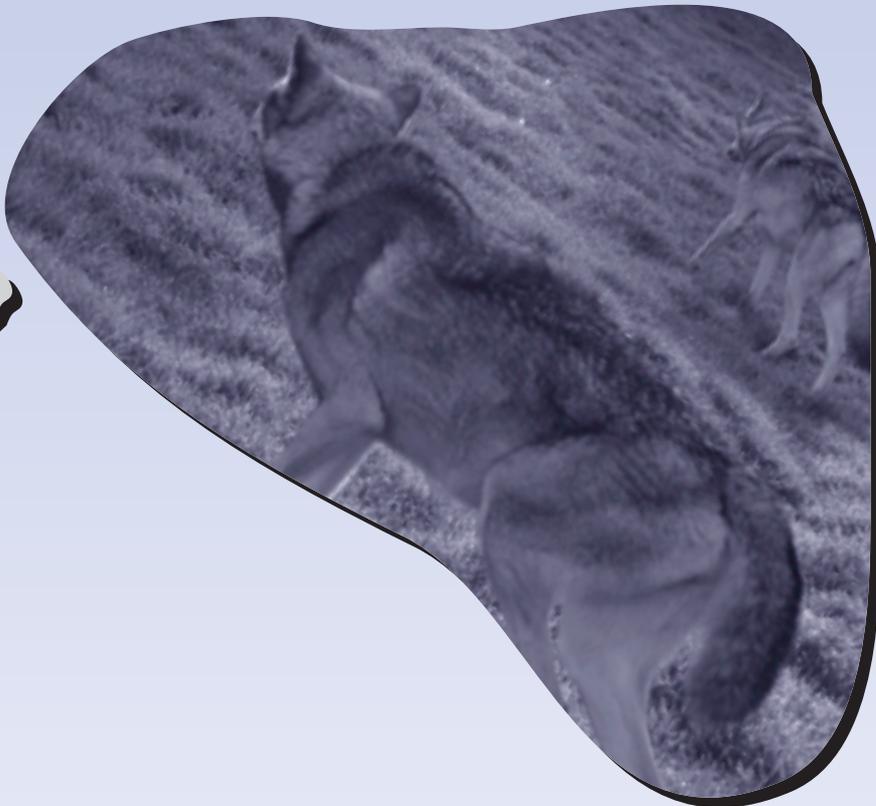
Ethos

For those of you who enjoyed the Ethos column in Issue 24, this will be a regular feature in Wolf Print. Unfortunately, we were unable to publish an Ethos article in this issue as timing (or lack of it) got the better of us following Bill Lynn's recent move from New York to Boston. I'm pleased to say that Bill is now settling into his new role at Tufts University, and we will be back on track for Issue 26.

FRONT COVER PICTURE CREDIT: CHRIS SENIOR



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Conference, Colorado Springs



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Inspired by Nature Festival



WOLVES

of the

WORLD . . .

EUROPE AND SCANDINAVIA

Finland

European Union wants fivefold increase in Finnish wolf population

Commission takes Finland to court for granting too many hunting permits

The European Commission is taking Finland before the Court of Justice of the European Communities for granting hunters permits to shoot wolves too freely.

The Commission wants Finland to let its wolf population grow to about 1,000, which is five times more than the present approximately 200 individuals: only then can measures to protect the endangered species be eased. Finland's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry rejects the Commission's view. According to ministry official Sauli Härkönen, the Commission is focusing excessively on the number of individual animals.

Härkönen says that an important factor in the equation is that the Finnish wolf population is directly linked with the much greater population across the border in Russia, where there are thousands of animals.

The ministry feels that the number of wolves is sufficient from the point of view of conservation, because in recent years the population has grown and spread to new areas.

"Each hunting permit has been carefully considered, and in most cases, the applications have been denied", Härkönen emphasises. The ministry has received applications for 180 permits to shoot a wolf in the past four years, but only 25 have been accepted.

At the Finnish League for Nature Conservation, wolf expert Riku Lumiaro says that the Commission is right to take issue

with wolf hunting in Finland. "Finland has deceived EU officials. Reports have not been given, and lies have been told. The EU has not been told of the poaching that takes place in Finland."

Lumiaro says that the wolf population could be allowed to grow to between 3,000 and 4,000. He says that there is plenty of food for them in Finnish forests, and a larger population would prevent the genetic deterioration of the population.

Finnish MEP Henrik Lax (Swedish People's Party) sharply criticised the Commission's views on Finnish wolves.

"The wolf is a dangerous animal, so it is irresponsible to claim that it is harmless. The EU does not have the right to force the citizens of its member states to live among dangerous animals", Lax said.

With their keen senses of hearing and smell, wolves can tell from afar if a human is approaching, and will generally avoid contact. They prefer to live in unpopulated forest areas.

Wolves pose virtually no danger to human beings. An estimated two million wolves were killed in Finland in the 20th century, but experts have no record of even a single case in which a healthy wild wolf would have killed a human being.

Numerous people are killed each year by dogs, hybrids between wolves and dogs, and tame wolves.

Source:

<http://www.helsinginsanomat.fi/english/article/European+Union+wants+fivefold+increase+in+Finnish+wolf+population%0D%0A/1101981190298>

France

A howl of a time: counting wolves in France

GAP, FRANCE – The setting fits the story. The Southern Alps of France lie between Cézanne's

Provence and Mont Blanc in a space where you can see both the painter's flowing landscapes and the jagged caps of Europe's highest mountain. The area is also where much of the country's wolf population resides. The animals, which reappeared in France only a few years ago, are stuck in the middle of a controversy over whether or not they should be allowed to stay. **GAP, FRANCE –** The setting fits the story. The Southern Alps of France lie between Cézanne's Provence and Mont Blanc in a space where you can see both the painter's flowing landscapes and the jagged caps of Europe's highest mountain. The area is also where much of the country's wolf population resides. The animals, which reappeared in France only a few years ago, are stuck in the middle of a controversy over whether or not they should be allowed to stay.

Stuck right alongside them are two men: one who delves into the philosophy of sheep and another who howls into an orange traffic cone in the middle of the night.

Killed off with government's help in the early 1900s, Italian gray wolves reappeared in France in the early 1990s. Environmentalists couldn't be happier; not only has a species returned, but the ecosystem is also healthy enough to support a new top-tier animal on the food chain.

The problem is, the wolves' food chain includes sheep, and, despite appearances, sheep are a billion-dollar-a-year big business in France. Quite simply, sheep owners want the wolves dead but they are protected by Europe's Bern Convention.

"We became used to them not being here. Now that they have come back, of course sheep owners think it's a constraint!" exclaims Marc Mallen, a former shepherd who describes himself as an "ethnopastoralist" - an expert in the relationships between

shepherds and the land they work.

Driving up tiny roads toward his home above Gap, Mr. Mallen explains the complexities of the issue. Sheep owners and shepherds are not usually one and the same, he points out. As the sheep industry evolved in the last century, shepherds became something like hired guns, forced to watch over larger and larger flocks.

"In the 1950s, a shepherd watched over 500 animals," he says. "Now, it's 1,500 and sometimes more."

Trouble is, the larger the flock, the easier it is for wolves to find an easy meal. "When you have flocks this big, you'll have more damage from wolves," Mallen says.

Stuck between the powerful sheep owners and the "ecolos," the French government has only made small gestures to each side, but they are committed to keeping tabs on the wolf population.

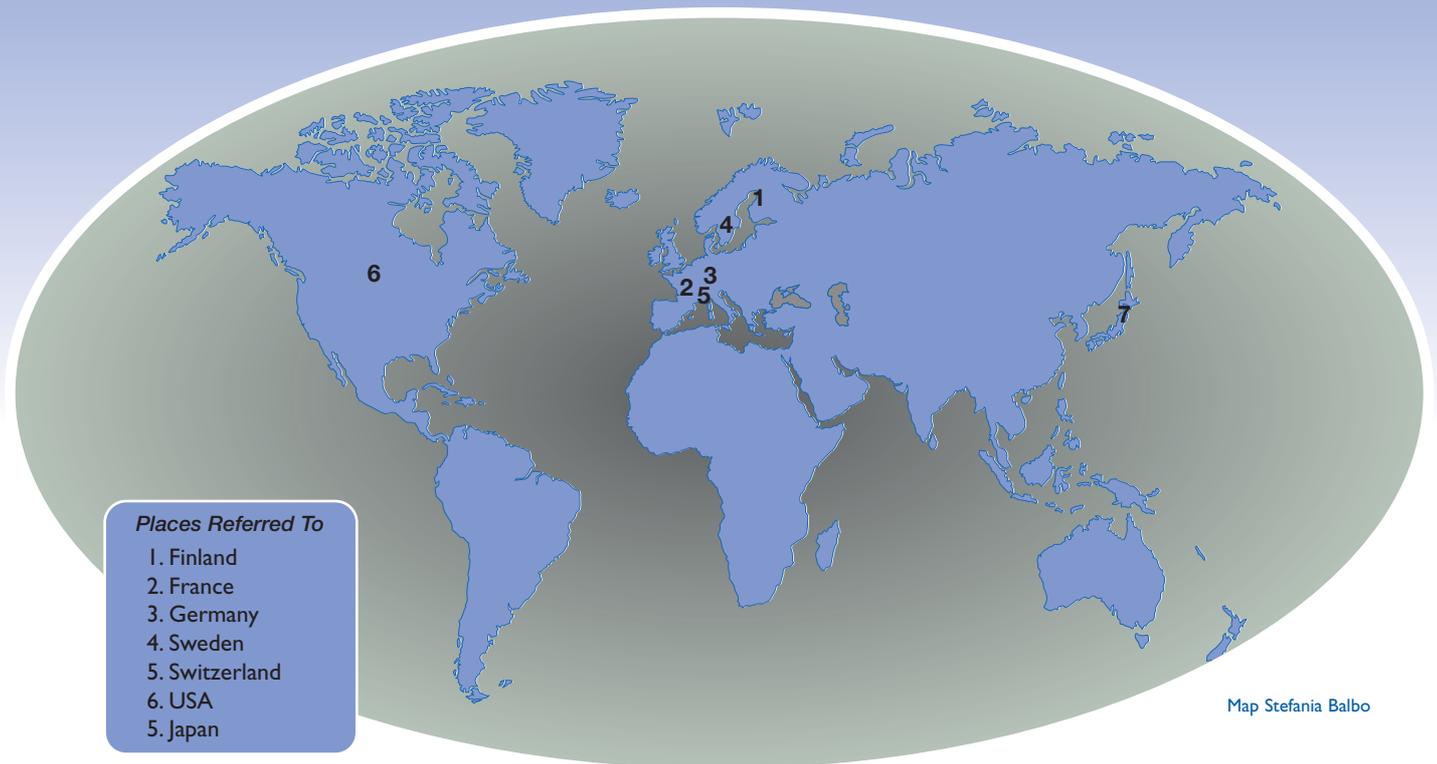
Enter the man with the traffic cone. Yannick Léonard is one of four wolf experts at the Office Nationale de la Chasse et Faune Sauvage (ONCFS), the French fish and wildlife department. He makes a conscious effort to stay out of the politics and do his job: Count wolves and figure out what the population is doing.

"I have an opinion, but when you work for the state, your job is to give good information to the decision makers," he says.

After driving into the Alps along the Italian border, he arrives for a late-night meeting with other wolf experts and volunteers. Their goal: to gather data to help determine if the wolf population is growing.

Their method: howling into traffic cones.

Just before 10 p.m., Mr. Léonard breaks the 11-person group into smaller groups and they set out into the mountains. Later, climbing up the side of a valley, he turns around and calls out, "Doing all right back there? No vertigo?"



Map Stefania Balbo

Looking back, the light from his headlamp vanishes over a sheer drop on the trail's edge.

An hour into the hike, Léonard stops shy of where he originally wanted to go because the trail has washed down the hill. He makes a few quick radio calls to other members of his team. By synchronizing, they won't mistake each other's howls for a wolf's.

Then he lifts the cone to his lips: "Aaaawwoooooohhhooooo!!!!!"

The sound fills the valley and spooks a local shepherd into calling Léonard on the radio to make sure it's not a real predator getting ready to snack on her flock.

"Adults have a sort of classic howl - 'Awooo,'" he explains, "and the pups yip." The presence of pups means the population is reproducing, something it has been doing slowly since the wolves were first found here.

He howls three times for a total of 30 seconds, listens for a few minutes, then tries again. On this night, Léonard does not hear any responses, but a member of the team in another location heard a howl and even had a sighting: the group's car almost hit a wolf on their way out to the howling site.

Along with the howling, the ONCFS runs DNA tests of wolf excrement, investigates photos sent in by hikers, and tracks wolves following a snowfall. Though this seems far from rocket science, this collection of loose methods gives Léonard a good grasp of population numbers; he estimates

there are between 80 and 100 wolves across the country.

Back up on his hill, Mallen reflects on the best solution for the issue. "Time," he says. "We'll help teach shepherds better ways to protect their flock, and the ecolos will understand that it's okay to kill a wolf from time to time."

Asked if that sounds a bit harsh, Mallen replies with a knowing grin "You'd have to be a good shot to hit a wolf."

Source:

By Joe Ray, Contributor to The Christian Science Monitor
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1103/p12s02-sten.html>

French Wolves, Rebounding From Extinction, Threaten Sheep Herds

Hubert Covarel stands on a windy mountain crest at 2,000 meters (6,600 feet) in the French Alps, scanning the valley below and wondering how many of his 950 sheep will be killed by wolves this year.

A shepherd lost a ewe last week, he says, on a rocky outcrop across to his left. An attack in a dale straight ahead killed 17 sheep 10 days ago. On a pasture hidden from view, a shepherd last year lost 100 sheep driven up from the south of France for grazing. Then he points to a nearby peak where his helper saw two wolves one evening in July before they ran away.

Wolves have returned to the Alps after being absent in France for 70 years and their numbers are growing. In Covarel's Savoie region, wolves attacked flocks 119 times this year, killing 390 sheep, the Agriculture Ministry says. The result is a confrontation between ecologists who welcome the return of the mythical predator, and shepherds who say a 1 billion-euro (\$1.23 billion) industry of lamb meat, milk and wool is at stake.

"The wolf makes city people dream," says Jean-Marc Guigue, a dairy farmer from near Chambéry who is president of the local branch of FNSEA, France's largest farmers' union. "But they haven't thought out the consequences. It will mean the end of pastures. The mountains will revert to fallow land."

To drive their point home, Guigue and Covarel on July 12 led 500 shepherds to hold up the start of the day's Tour de France bicycle race stage near Grenoble. On Sept. 22 they led 700 shepherds and 450 sheep into the nearby city of Chambéry to protest before government offices. A shepherd who said he'd lost 12 sheep blocked a road into Italy for three hours in July.

Authorized Killings

The French government, while a signatory of European conventions protecting the wolf, on June 17 authorized the killing of six wolves, which shepherds say is not enough. Environmentalists

have unsuccessfully fought the decree in courts and activists have hounded park rangers hunting wolves. A shepherd killed a wolf July and a ranger killed one Sept. 2.

Florence Englebert, head of the wolf project at France Nature Environment, an environmental group, says French shepherds need to copy their Italian and Spanish counterparts by grouping their animals at night and using dog guards.

"French shepherds have gotten so used to the wolves' absence they have forgotten how to guard their flocks," Englebert said in a telephone interview with the National Park of the Queyras in the Alps. "It's a sector that can't survive without government subsidies and they are using the wolf to mask their other problems."

Missing

Like most French shepherds, Covarel, 50, used to send his sheep into the mountains in the summer, driving up once a week to check on them and select lambs for slaughter. Then in 1997, about 40 sheep went missing. The next year he lost another 40. When he found some with their throats ripped out, he called in wardens from the National Office of Hunting and Nature, who confirmed they were wolf attacks.

"We knew wolves had crossed into France from Italy in the Maritime Alps 250 kilometers to the south," he said. "But we had no idea they'd made it here."



Wolves were extinct in France after 1927 when hunters killed the last ones near Limoges, in the west of the country. Then in 1992, after two decades of slowly expanding north in Italy, they appeared in the Mercantour National Park north of Nice. Then they began spreading throughout the French Alps.

Wolf Dogs

Englebert and other environmentalists estimate there are now between 50 and 70 wolves in France, with three having made it as far as the eastern Pyrenees. Covarel says he thinks there's closer to 200 of them in the country.

Because wolves never disappeared from Italy, shepherds there have always kept wolf dogs, generally the all-white Maremmano. Unlike France, most Italian sheep in wolf country are for milk, not meat, so they are rounded up anyway every night. Even so, at least 25 wolves are illegally poisoned or shot each year, according to Massimiliano Rocco, director for Italian fauna at the World Wildlife Fund in Rome.

Covarel in 1999 started keeping his sheep within a 5-kilometer-long, meter-tall electric wire fence.

For the past three years he's hired an assistant for the summer months. In March he drove to central Italy and returned with 20 Maremmans that he bought for 250 euros (\$308) each and distributed to local farmers. He kept three for his own flock. He's lost only one sheep to the wolves this year.

Not Eradication

Shepherds threatened by wolves can receive up to 20,000 euros a year from Life-Nature, a 300 million-euro European Union program that funds nature projects throughout Europe. In exchange, they must agree to group their flocks at night with electrified wire, and guard them with dogs.

Covarel says those subsidies help but don't solve the problem. Wire fences can't be used on rocky or steep terrain, he says. Shepherds who used to do other types of farming on the side now have to choose between staying with their flocks and giving up other activities.

Covarel and Guigue say they accept that wolves are here to stay and aren't asking for eradication. They want the right to shoot wolves that attack their animals. To kill a wolf, a flock must have been the victim of three attacks in three weeks in the same area. The farmer must apply to a local government office for the right to

shoot in case of a fourth attack.

"If a wild boar damages some grapes, the farmer can legally shoot it," Guigue says. "If a wolf kills livestock, he's supposed to just do nothing."

Source:

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=10000100&sid=aYuZS6AK.I4Q&refer=germany>

Germany

Wolves, Bears Make Comeback in Europe

Are wolves making a happy return or just plain trouble for Germany?

Bears in Switzerland, wolves in Germany. Wildlife that humans had once driven to extinction in Central Europe is making a return in the 21st century. The conditions for their survival in modern times look good. The three hikers were absolutely certain. In the Swiss Alps, along the border with Italy, they sighted a brown bear through their binoculars -- the first one in the mountainous country since the last one had been killed in 1904.

As a result, of the sighting, hotel reservations in the Mustair valley region where the bear sighting took place have shot up: European tourists, many who would have to travel a long way to see the ursine creature outside a zoo, found another good reason to visit Switzerland.

Wildlife such as bears, wolves and lynxes that had been unwelcome, mostly by farmers in agriculturally heavier times, is welcome by environmentalists and even government officials. The Swiss government, anxious to attract the animal that gave the name to its capital, Bern, set aside land in the southeast of the country so that bears from a sleuth of some 20 in Italy would feel secure enough to wander across the border.

Conditions must be right

In preparation for a potential return of the bear to Switzerland, the wildlife group WWF, based in Gland, Switzerland, published a report that explained which two factors would make territory attractive for bears. Firstly, there must be enough distance from the bears habitat to human communities and roads. Secondly, the forest must offer enough food.

For wolves it isn't much different. They have returned to eastern regions in Germany because there they have sufficient space to raise their whelps and can find adequate amounts of food.

European farmers worry, though, that if numbers expand

too quickly, the reintroduction of predatory animals such as bears, wolves and lynxes to Central Europe provides a large threat. For if there isn't enough natural prey, such as rodents or deer, then the supposed traditional food of choice -- sheep -- frequently are found on farms. Hunters, on the other hand, are concerned about the increased competition for deer.

At the moment, according to the Wild Biological Society of Munich, there is enough room in the southeast of Germany for 100 to 200 wolves. Improved means of protection.

The shepherd and cowboy were not always able to protect their sheep

from wolves in the past. A wolf expert from Germany's natural preservation society NABU, Gesa Kluth, has supplied farmers in the Lausitz region with tall electrical fences to protect their flocks. Even farm-owner associations now have a more inclusive attitude towards wolves. Dieter Tanneberger, president of the association for private farmers, views them as a cultural treasure. And unlike a century ago, should a sheep be killed by a wolf, a farmer is insured.

But the Lausitz-based association has yet to receive a wolf complaint.

Fairy tales gave bad name

The thought of encountering a wolf or bear in the forest may send chills down hikers' spines but the chances are rather thin. In Romania, brown bears have recently attacked and killed three humans in a few days' time. Nevertheless, over half of all Germans feel that both humans and wildlife that originally lived in Germany can cohabitate peacefully according to a recent opinion poll.

Experts say the word must be spread that wild animals only rarely kill humans, usually if a person strays too close to a wolf's or bear's cubs, and that they for the most part avoid contact with human civilization.

"The wolf isn't a mean animal like the one we are familiar with from fairy tales," said Bettina Langer from NABU. "They don't eat grandmothers."

Source:

<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,1564,1687025,00.html>

Sweden

Finnish hunter kills Swedish wolf

A Finnish hunting tourist in Medelpad shot dead a wolf which

attacked his hunting dog on Friday. The only reason he had come to Sweden was that he was afraid of encountering a wolf on a hunt in Finland.

The wolf is probably a so-called alpha male, whose mate had an unknown quantity of cubs in May. According to Västernorrland council's wildlife consultant Gunnar Ledström, this is the first wolf killed in the area since the beginning of the 1990s.

"This is unfortunate, but it doesn't mean that the whole wolf repopulation process is shot to pieces," he said.

"Now a greater burden will fall on the female to provide for her young, but they normally manage. Soon she'll probably find a new mate."

The hunter, a man in his 40s, raised the alarm himself. He was out with his dog hunting birds when the wolf appeared. First he fired a warning shot, but the wolf was unperturbed and when it attacked the dog, the hunter fired two shots from a few metres away. With a fourth shot he killed the beast.

While Sundsvall police's Roger Wiklander said that there is no reason to doubt the hunter's tale, he is automatically facing charges of committing a "serious hunting offence".

He is claiming self-defence but his weapon has been confiscated. The man's dog was uninjured.

The dead wolf has been frozen and will be taken to the national veterinary centre in Uppsala for a post mortem.

Killing a wolf is seriously frowned upon by the Swedish courts. A Dalsland farmer who shot dead a wolf which had killed ten of his sheep was recently imprisoned for six months, while a man in Roslagen was given community service for shooting a wolf who had killed a neighbour's sheep.

Source:

<http://www.thelocal.se/article.php?ID=2021&date=20050904>

Switzerland

Swiss hit by WWF over call for Europe wolf hunts

GENEVA (Reuters) - The international conservation body WWF on Wednesday accused Switzerland of undermining hopes for the return of wolf populations in western Europe with a proposal to allow some hunting of the animals.

WWF said the proposal -- filed for a meeting of the 1979 Berne Convention on protecting wildlife



to be held at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg next week - was "unacceptable and irresponsible."

"It is incredible that Switzerland, with a wolf population of two or three individuals, has the audacity to ask the Council of Europe to allow hunting," said Joanna Schoenenberger, a specialist in the WWF's European Alpine Program.

Swiss officials said what they sought was a change in the wolf's status under the Convention from "strictly protected" to "protected", like the lynx, thus allowing controlled culling in order to maintain a manageable population level.

"The aim is to limit the scope for conflict with mountain farming," said one government official.

Wolves were driven to extinction throughout most of western Europe by the start of the 20th century, largely by hunting and the expansion of human settlements and upland farming into areas in which they had ranged free.

Return to the Alps

But over the past few decades, partly as a result of the Berne Convention, some have returned to the Alps -- stretching from France across northern Italy and Switzerland to Austria -- with the help of conservationists.

Single animals came back to Switzerland from Italy in 1995.

"But none of these individuals have reproduced. Any culling in the Alps would be a disaster for the wolf population here," the WWF's Schoenenberger said in a statement. The Strasbourg meeting, on November 28 and December 1, is a session of the Standing Committee of the Berne Convention, named for the Swiss capital where it was signed and aimed at preserving European wildlife and its natural habitat.

The Council of Europe, which links countries inside and outside the European Union in the west and east of the continent, supervises implementation of the Convention.

Swiss officials argue that the wolf population presents a threat to local communities in mountain areas and to their livestock, especially sheep.

Farmers often blame wolves for the loss of sheep. But the WWF, formerly known as the World Wide Fund for Nature, says dogs are usually the killers.

Source:

By Robert Evans

http://today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=scienceNews&storyID=2005-1123T000400Z_01_ARM300209_RTRUKOC_0_US-ENVIRONMENT-WOLVES.xml

NORTH AMERICA

United States of America

Colorado

Wildlife group pledges funds for ranchers if wolves return to Colorado

DENVER (AP) - An environmental group has offered to help pay ranchers for livestock killed by wolves if Rocky Mountain National Park decides to reintroduce the predators to reduce its overabundant elk population. Washington-based Defenders of Wildlife has paid more than \$500,000 to ranchers in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Arizona and New Mexico for confirmed losses to wolves and bears. The group also has spent \$470,000 on projects to keep wolves away from livestock. It pledges similar support in Colorado.

"No matter how and when wolves come to Colorado, we will commit these funds," said Jonathan Proctor, who heads the group's Denver office.

"We hope to save wolves by preventing conflicts in the first place," he said.

Rocky Mountain National Park Superintendent Vaughan Baker said the group's offer would be taken into account when a decision is made.

The park is considering introducing wolves to help kill elk and drive them from areas where their browsing has damaged habitat for songbirds, butterflies and beavers. The elk, estimated at 3,000 to 4,000 head, are also blamed for property damage outside the park.

Some doubt managers could keep wolves in the 226,000-acre park once they are introduced.

The Colorado Cattlemen's Association opposes any reintroduction of wolves in the state, said Terry Frankhauser, an association executive vice president.

Wolves were wiped out in Colorado by the 1930s after ranchers, government agents and others shot, trapped and poisoned the predator.

The state Division of Wildlife developed a wolf management plan in May after a lone wolf traced to Yellowstone National Park was found dead along Interstate 70 in the mountains west of Denver. The animal was wearing a radio collar.

The state's management plan calls for leaving migrating wolves alone unless they attack livestock or harm other wildlife.

Source:

Posted by: Dan Werner Web producer

http://www.9news.com/acm_news.aspx?OSGNAME=KUSA&IKOBJECTID=98aefb1d-0abe-421a-0024-707bblca7186&TEMPLATEID=0c76dce6-ac1f02d8-0047-c589c01ca7bf

Yellowstone National Park Hunting Habits of Wolves Change Ecological Balance in Yellowstone

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, Wyo. - Hiking along the small, curling Blacktail Deer Creek, Douglas W. Smith, a wolf biologist, makes his way through a lush curtain of willows.

Nearly absent for decades, willows have roared back to life in Yellowstone, and the reason, Mr. Smith believes, is that 10 years after wolves were introduced to Yellowstone, the park is full of them, dispersed across 13 packs. He says the wolves have changed the park's ecology in many ways; for one, they have scared the elk to high ground and away from browsing on every willow shoot by rivers and streams.

"Wolves have caused a trophic cascade," he said.

"Wolves are at the top of it all here. They change the

conditions for everyone else, including willows."

The last 10 years in Yellowstone have re-written the book on wolf biology. Wildlife biologists and ecologists are stunned by the changes they have seen.

It is a rare chance to understand in detail how the effects of an "apex predator" ripple through an ecosystem. Much of what has taken place is recounted in the recently released book "Decade of the Wolf: Returning the Wild to Yellowstone," by Mr. Smith and Gary Ferguson.

In 1995, 14 wolves from Canada were brought into the park by truck and sleigh in the dead of winter, held in a cage for 10 weeks and released. Seventeen were added in 1996. Now, about 130 wolves in 13 packs roam the park.

Yellowstone, says Mr. Smith, is full. Over the next 10 years, elk numbers dropped considerably. One of the world's largest elk herds, which feeds on rich grasses on the northern range of the park, dropped from 19,000 in 1994 to about 11,000. Wolf reintroduction has been cited as the culprit by hunters, but Mr. Smith says the cause is more complex.

Data recently released after three years of study by the Park Service, the United States Geological Survey and the University of Minnesota found that 53 percent of elk deaths were caused by grizzly bears that eat calves. Just 13 percent were linked to wolves and 11 percent to coyotes. Drought is also playing a role. The study is continuing.

Scientists do say that wolf predation has been significant enough to redistribute the elk. That has in turn affected vegetation and a variety of wildlife.

The elk had not seen wolves since the 1920's when they disappeared from the park. Over the last 10 years, as they have been hunted by wolf packs, they have grown more vigilant.

They move more than they used to, and spend most of their time in places that afford a 360-degree view, said Mr. Smith. They do not spend time in places where they do not feel secure - near a rise or a bluff, places that could conceal wolves.

In those places willow thickets, and cottonwoods have bounced back. Aspen stands are also being rejuvenated. Until recently the only cottonwood trees in the park were 70 to 100 years old. Now large numbers of saplings are sprouting.

William Ripple, a professor of



Photo: Chris Senior



botany at Oregon State University, calls the process the "ecology of fear," which has allowed the vegetation to thrive as a result of behavioral changes in the newly skittish and peripatetic elk.

Though the changes now are on a fairly small scale, the effects of the wolves will spread, and in 30 years, according to Mr. Smith, Yellowstone will look very different.

Not everyone is convinced. "Wolves have a role to play," said Robert Crabtree, a canid biologist who has researched wolves and coyotes in the park since the late 1980's. "But the research has ignored climate change and flooding, which have also had an effect on vegetation. Their work isn't wrong, but it's incomplete."

Where willows and cottonwoods have returned, they stabilize the banks of streams and provide shade, which lowers the water temperature and makes the habitat better for trout, resulting in more and bigger fish. Songbirds like the yellow warbler and Lincoln sparrow have increased where new vegetation stands are thriving.

Willow and aspen, food for beaver, have brought them back to the streams and rivers on the northern range. In 1996, there was one beaver dam on the northern range; now there are 10.

The number of wolves has also greatly increased the amount of meat on the ground to the benefit of other species.

Grizzlies and coyotes rarely kill adult elk, but each pack of wolves kills an elk every two or three days. After they eat their fill, other carnivores take over the carcass. Opportunistic scavengers like magpies and ravens make a living on the carcasses.

The number of coyotes, on the other hand, has fallen by half. Numbers of their prey - voles, mice and other rodents - have grown. And that, in turn bolsters the populations of red foxes and the raptors.

The wolves in Yellowstone are not hunted, but they do face hazards. They kill one another in violent encounters between different packs. Fourteen wolves have been killed by cars in the last 10 years, eight of them at Mile Marker 30, on U.S. 191 on the west side of the park.

But the most worrisome threat is posed by the dogs that people bring to the park. The dogs can carry parvovirus, which is the leading cause of death in the wolves over the last year, and it has been killing 60 to 70 percent of the pups.

The wolf population decreased to 130 from 170 in the last year from all causes. Biologists plan to count wolves again this winter and do more testing, and they expect to learn more about the effects of the virus. "I'm a little concerned," Mr. Smith said.

Much is yet to be discovered in the natural laboratory of Yellowstone. "Ten years is not that long a time to measure the effects of wolves," Mr. Smith said. "Their effects are so far reaching and changing that it takes a long time for them to emerge."

Source:
Anne Sherwood for The New York Times
By Jim Robbins
<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/18/science/earth/18wolf.html>

FAR EAST

Japan

Once There Were Wolves Shrines are no salve when it comes to extinctions

Natural selection these days can be more than a little unnatural, especially in Japan, which has a curious relationship with nature. The country has maintained an enviable proportion of natural forest cover -- by importing the wood it needs from tropical forests, largely in Southeast Asia.

But the money to be made from building contracts means it has concreted vast lengths of the rivers and streams running through its forests.

Consequently, hundreds of plant and animal species are now rare and endangered because of such habitat destruction.

Yet in many ways, nature is revered in Japan (who mentioned whaling?). Folklore abounds with tales of beneficial animal spirits. Insects are not loathed as "creepy-crawlies" like in the West, but are, on the whole, cherished. Some, such as kabutomushi (horned beetles) have iconic status.

The wild popularity of cherry blossom viewing in spring and leaf-gazing in autumn is also closely tied in with the Japanese affinity for nature. But the love of nature sits uneasily with the economic appetite of one of the world's richest nations.

In some cases, a change in the Japanese attitude to nature can be traced to a specific event. Perhaps the most important such event, and one of the most important events in Japanese history, was the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate in

1867. Of the many knock-on effects, one was the extinction of the Japanese wolf.

There were two subspecies, the Hokkaido wolf, and the smaller Honshu wolf (like the two bear species still living in Japan today, the animals living in Hokkaido needed to be bigger because of the harsher climate). Both were distinct from wolves in Europe and North America; the Honshu wolf, only about 30 cm tall at the shoulder, was the smallest known variety of wolf.

In former times, wolves were revered and respected. They were seen by farmers as guardians of their crops. It was believed that wolves kept deer, hares and wild boars from causing damage to farmland. The Heian Period warlord ruler of northeastern Honshu, Fujiwara no Hidehira (1096-1187), was said to have been raised by wolves, like Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome.

In Yamanashi Prefecture, offerings of azuki bean rice were left for wolves when cubs were born. It was sometimes believed that the tradition, known as inu no ubumimai, would be reciprocated by the wolf when a human child was born.

However, with the growing influence of American culture after the Meiji Restoration, Japanese people's benign view of the wolf began to change. The country was hell-bent on modernization, and that left no room for wolves.

In Hokkaido, a cowboy from Ohio, Edwin Dun, was recruited to start a ranching industry. Under Dun's influence, the Hokkaido Development Board started poisoning wolves with strychnine. Hunting, for bounties, followed. In only 20 years, the Hokkaido wolf was extinct. By 1905 the Honshu wolf was also extinct (it appears that the death of the last Honshu wolf can't be blamed on the Americans: it was killed in Nara and the specimen is now kept in the British Museum.)

In remote, mountainous parts of Japan, rumors persist that the wolf is alive and well. But these reports have never been confirmed. The wolf was credited with having a great affinity with the spirit of the mountains. Other iconic Japanese animals, such as the fox and the tanuki (raccoon dog) are said to be able to escape detection by assuming human (often female) form. But the wolf's skill at concealment was down to its oneness with the natural mountain environment.

Should the wolf be reintroduced to Japan? One problem is that the

gray wolf of Europe is simply different to the variety of gray wolf that lived in Japan. Europeans killed off most of their wolves long ago, but they were reintroduced to Sweden and Norway in the mid-1990s. Some environmental groups want to see them reintroduced to Scotland, too.

But extinction is final. There is no reservoir of Hokkaido and Honshu wolves that can be protected and raised again. There are a few stuffed specimens and pelts, so there remains the theoretical possibility that if good-quality DNA was extracted, Japanese wolves could be cloned - although that is extremely unlikely to happen, let alone leading to the reestablishment of a thriving population.

The "regular" gray wolf could be introduced into Japan, but the political hurdles would be formidable, and however much I'd like it, I can't see it happening.

Perhaps more realistic would be to invoke more widely the former respect for nature that was symbolized in the respect bestowed on the Japanese wolf. Mitsumine Shrine in Saitama Prefecture still has a wolf god. On the Kii Peninsula, too, there are Shinto shrines dedicated to wolves. What a change it would make if the prime minister visited one of those shrines, instead of Yasukuni. How inspiring it would be if a politician paid respect to nature instead of to war criminals enshrined among the nation's fallen. But of course, that's also a political hurdle too far.

A book of Natural Selections columns translated into Japanese, "Nou to sekkusu no seibutsugaku (Evolution, Sex and the Brain)," is published by Shinchosha. Rowan Hooper is a biologist at Trinity College, Dublin. He welcomes readers' comments or questions at rowan.hooper@tcd.ie

The Japan Times: Sept. 28, 2005

Source:
By Rowan Hooper
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/getarticle.pl5?fe20050928rh.htm>

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.



Wolf – Legend and Mythology in an Indian Context

by Bilal Habib

"The wolf is neither man's competitor nor his enemy. He is a fellow creature with whom the earth must be shared"

L. David Mech

It was on a warm and sun-drenched day of the monsoons in 2002, when I along with my boss, Dr Satish Kumar, were scanning the dry and semi-desert grasslands of Nannaj in Maharashtra for any traces of rare and elusive canid of India, the wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*). We were looking for a site that would provide logistic facilities within the reach of a wolf core area. After a month long survey of Nannaj and its adjoining areas it was decided to site a field station at GIB Sanctuary, Nannaj in order to explore the secrets of this enigmatic canid and the area was henceforth selected for intensive study through radio collaring of the animals.

So fascinating and mysterious are the legends and myths related to this animal that studying it takes one through past times, cultures and varied traditions; making it an all-encompassing scientific study with mythological, social and cultural aspects.

The grasslands of Nannaj are green for only 2-3 months in a year and it is quite an experience to see the entire landscape changing from golden yellow to bright green.

Tracking wolves with radio-signals means having to catch these intelligent and cunning animals first, which is itself such a

demanding task that only someone with similar experience will appreciate the challenges faced.

To try and capture our wolves, we used rubber jawed leg-hold traps buried in the ground. Wolves are highly intelligent animals and they can immediately detect any changes made in their area and will avoid any ground which has been dug to

conceal traps. To overcome this we dug the area a week before putting in the traps so that the wolves became familiar with those spots. Since wolves range over very large areas, getting them to step exactly on the trap's trigger is a matter of both skill and luck. We used long distance call and wolf gland lures to attract wolves to those spots. Scats from other packs were also



Study area Nannaj during dry season. Photo: Bilal Habib

used to encourage wolves to visit these areas frequently.

The rubber-jawed traps hold the wolf's foot without any injury. The animal is then anaesthetised and fitted with a radio-collar. It is after collaring that the secrets of these elusive carnivores can start to be revealed.

Indians of earlier times respected the wolf for its skills as a predator and its devotion to the welfare of its companions: a model of social behaviour for humans of modern age. The song "*Labad Landga Dong Karta*" which in English translates "Wolves are genius and use devilness to fool" signifies a deep cultural relationship between wolves and the Marathi culture. The song reflects the genius and dexterity of wolves and the theme signifies the deep understanding of the animal that the people of the time had. Although I am unaware of the origins of the song, it is one of the most 'frequently-hummed' tunes amongst the Marathi men.

Wolf Legends

Wolf mythology is filled with stories of wolves raising orphaned children. The earliest accounts are probably related to

the wolf's early status as a symbol of fertility. One of the oldest of these is about the twin brothers Romulus and Remus, born in the heart of the city Rome. They were condemned to death as babies and thrown into the River Tiber. They were the illegitimate sons of the vestal virgin Rhea Silvia and the God Mars. A female wolf found the twins, her maternal instincts took over and she suckled them and took them to a cave overlooking Rome. The children were later discovered by a shepherd and became part of his family.

It is interesting to note that most wolf-child stories originate after 1894, when Rudyard Kipling introduced the character of Mowgli, an Indian orphan raised by wolves, in *The Jungle Book*.

Many wolf-child stories originate from India, where it is common for poverty-stricken parents to abandon unwanted children. The most well-known of India's tales is the case of Amala and Kamala; two girls reported to have been found by the Reverend J. A. L. Singh huddled together with two wolf pups in a wolf den near Calcutta in 1920. Reportedly, the girls could

not stand upright, preferred darkness to light, and would eat only raw meat. One died a year later of kidney failure at the age of about two and a half, and the other, about eight years old when found, died at about seventeen of the same cause. Subsequent investigation of Reverend Singh, who published a book about his experience in 1942 and wrote in his diary about his obsession about turning a "creature of the Devil" into a servant of God, found that he did not have a good reputation. It is most likely that he had invented the story to raise funds for his orphanage. From the girls' recorded behavior, it is likely that they were either autistic or retarded. One of the more recent reports of feral children also originates from India, taking place near Musafirkhana in 1972. The four-year-old boy ended up at Mother Theresa's Home in Lucknow, where he died seven years later.

Many Native American Plains Indians expressed the four cardinal points in terms of animals. The bear represented the west, the mountain lion the north, the wildcat for the south, and, the wolf stood for the east.



Male wolf. Photo: Raja Purhoit



The people of the times believed that heavenly wolves visited the earth when the northern lights shone in winter. Of the hundreds of recorded Indian wolf legends, one of the best known is the Cree story of the Earth-Maker Wolf and the creation of the world.

Why the wolf howls?

It was common for Native Americans to interpret natural history in terms of wolf behavior. A number of tribes thought that the wolf howls after eating in order to invite scavengers such as birds to come and eat. Many tribes believed that wolf howls were the cries of lost spirits trying to return to Earth. Scientifically, however, wolf howling whether it is full moon night or dark night is totally a different science.

Even though wolves bark, woof, whine, whimper, yelp, growl, snarl and moan a lot more often than they howl, it is howling that defines the wolf, and fascinates us. So why do wolves howl?

The center of a wolf's universe is its pack, and howling is the glue that keeps the pack together. Some have speculated that howling strengthens the social bonds between pack mates; the pack that howls together stays together. However, the lowest-ranking members may actually be "punished" for joining in the chorus. Whether howling together actually strengthens social bonds, or just reaffirms them, is unknown.

We do know, however, that howling keeps pack mates together, physically. Because wolves range over vast areas to find food, they are often separated from one another. Of all their calls, howling is the only one that works over great distances. Its low pitch and long duration are well suited for transmission in open grassland areas, and unique features of each individual's howl allow wolves to identify each other. Howling is a long distance contact and reunion call.

The alpha male or the dominant male of the pack, who fathers the pups, tends to howl more boldly. He is most likely to howl to, and even approach, a stranger often with confrontation on his mind. On such occasions, the howls become lower-pitched and coarser in tone as he approaches the



Wolves crossing the busy road.
Photo: Vinod Bartakke and Bilal Habib

stranger. Lowering the pitch of a vocalization is a nearly universal sign of increasing aggressiveness in mammals, and in wolves it can sound quite impressive.

Howling also helps in confirming territoriality among rival packs by proclaiming each other's location. So wolves howl to find their companions and keep their neighbors at bay. Popular imagination has long held that they also howl at the moon, but there is no evidence that this is so. Wolves may be more active on moonlit nights, when they can see better, or we may hear them more often on such nights, because we feel more comfortable tramping about in the light of a full moon, but a wolf howling at the moon would be wasting its breath.

People's Attitude - Can make the difference

"I've always said that the best wolf habitat resides in the human heart. You have to leave a little space for them to live."

Ed Bangs

In India, the real danger to the wolf is from the local people. Pups are smoked out from dens and adults are killed while attacking the livestock. Under limitations of space dispersing wolves are forced to establish new packs, in human dominated landscapes thereby increasing the chances of conflict. The extreme attitude towards the animal has lingered on since the Middle Ages, when wolves were thought to be in league with the forces of evil. Many tales connected the wolf with Satan and the dark powers of the supernatural world giving rise to the 'werewolf'.

The only way to conserve the dwindling wolf population in a country like ours is public attitude. We can never have exclusive National Parks and Sanctuaries for wolves like we have for Tigers and Lions since wolves are known to wander over large areas.

In fact, the wolf once had the largest natural range of any land animals, besides *Homo sapiens*. From being omnipresent and abundant, it has assumed an endangered status. Protecting such big areas for wolves is impossible especially in a country like ours. The best way, hence, to protect the species is public awareness. Since we share a common habitat, if only we could accept wolves like we have accepted dogs in our streets, then the wolves can hope to have a brighter future.

Conservation action over the years has also included long term research on all the aspects of wolf ecology. Compensation to owners who lose their livestock because of wolf attacks and continuous check for rabid animals must be considered seriously. An extensive awareness campaigning should be launched to teach people about the wolves and dispel the myths.



Researcher weighing wolf. Photo: R.N. Nale

Bilal Habib is a Wildlife Researcher with Department of Wildlife Sciences, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh India where he received his Masters in Wildlife Sciences in 2001. Subsequently, he worked on a collaborative project between Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS) Dehradun, India and Department of Wildlife Sciences for evaluating Cervid habitat using remote sensing and GIS techniques along with advanced statistical techniques to develop modelling procedures. After this he worked with Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) Coimbatore, India on two different short term project. He carried out an extensive sub-thematic review of the use of Remote Sensing and GIS Tools for NBSAP (National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan) and worked on National Level Mapping of Wetlands of India. During his short tenure at SACON he also helped other researchers in modelling animal habitat relationships using Remote Sensing and GIS. Bilal's current research emphasis is Ecology and Conservation of Indian Wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*) in semi-arid drought prone areas of Maharashtra, India. He is a PhD candidate working on his thesis entitled "Ecology of the Indian Wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*) and modeling its potential habitat in the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary, Maharashtra, India" under the supervision of Dr. Satish Kumar.

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Falklands 'Wolf' (Extinct)

by Sue Sefcik

INTRODUCTION

The Falklands Wolf is also known as the Falkland Island Wolf, Falklands Fox, Falkland Island Fox, Antarctic Wolf, Warrah, and by Argentine writers as the Malvinas Zorro. The scientific name is generally agreed

upon as *Dusicyon australis*, although it was formerly named *Canis antarcticus* by Charles Darwin. *Canis* is the same genus as the domestic dog, wolf and coyote. It was the only native land mammal of the Falkland Islands. Oldfield Thomas (1914) moved it

into the genus *Dusicyon*; today, it is the only species within that genus. It would possibly be most closely related to the culpeo (*Pseudalopex griseus*) or Patagonian fox as well as other South American foxes. Its genus is still debated today because DNA studies of remaining remnants have been inconclusive. Only 11 specimens remain today, one complete specimen being in the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, and the other found in the Swedish Museum of Natural History, Stockholm. There remain nine incomplete or possible specimens scattered in museums around the world.

The genus name, *Dusicyon*, means "foolish dog" in Greek, i.e., "dusi" meaning foolish and "cyon" meaning dog.

For purposes of this article, it shall be called the Falklands fox since the descriptive information and its apparent ancestry would appear to classify it more as a fox rather than a wolf.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Generally, the Falklands fox stood about 60 cm (24 inches) at the shoulder. It had brownish-grey fur with black ears and a paler underbody. To the first visitors, it resembled a wolf, but with shorter legs. It had a broad skull with small ears. They were said to bark just like a dog.



Dusicyon australis



Falkland Island fox

The coat was extremely dense and brownish-red in color (perhaps similar to *Pseudalopex culpaeus*?). It had an agouti effect, yellowish with black tips, darker along the back. The neck and the legs were yellowish-brown with a lighter colored stomach, throat and lips. The ears were grey. The tail, which was a darker brown than the body, became more black towards the tip until ending with a distinctive white tip.

It is possible that the Falklands fox on West Falkland were smaller, redder and darker, with finer fur. In 1844, Bartholomew Sullivan, second lieutenant on the Beagle voyage, wrote to Darwin, "It is quite incorrect what we were told respecting the difference in the Foxes of the two Islands. They are the same both in size and color. We have never been able to detect any difference." However, Oldfield Thomas measured skulls of the East and West Falkland animals and reached the opposite conclusion. Obviously, no certainty is possible. Thomas called the East Falkland foxes *Dusicyon darwini* and *Dusicyon australis* for the West Falkland foxes.

Studies of the skull indicate the frontal bones would have given it a slightly bulbous look. In 1880, zoologist Thomas Huxley concluded from skull comparisons that the Falklands fox was related to the coyote, although this continues to be debated.

Because they became extinct so quickly, without scientific study, nothing is known about the Falkland fox's reproductive or social behavior.



Falkland Island wolf

HISTORY

The Falklands Islands are located off the coast of Argentina, South America. The Falklands fox is the only canine native to an oceanic island; therefore, its distribution there was very unusual. Speculation includes suggesting it may have originally arrived with South American natives visiting the islands. It may have been kept by them as a semi-domesticated pet. During this domestication process, the Falklands fox may have had a common relation with *canis latrans*, the North American coyote.

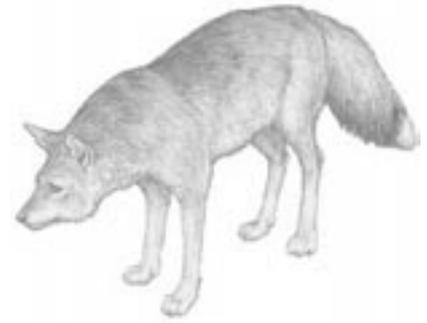
The first historical evidence of the Falklands fox can be found in the writings of a sailor, possibly Captain Strong of the HMS Warfare, somewhere between 1689 and 1692.

In the early 1700s, Spanish settlers introduced cattle to the Falklands Islands; the fox was killed in huge numbers. They were extremely tame, having had no reason to fear man since there had previously been no men on their islands. ("*Dusicyon*").

They were lured to humans with meat and then stabbed to their death. Sheep farmers laid poison baits, much as was done with the Australian Thylacine. And much like the thylacine, the Falklands fox probably didn't really offer any threat to livestock. Because there were no native rodents, their main food sources would possibly have been geese, penguins and other ground nesting birds and vegetation. Due to their proximity to beaches, the Falklands fox would probably have been seashore scavengers. Before men brought the cattle, there were none and so cattle would not have been a logical food source for the fox.

In 1765, Commodore John Byron arrived in the Falklands. He sent men to West Falkland to study the south coast. According to writings, when they tried to disembark, they were driven back into the boat "by four creatures of great fierceness resembling wolves." The next day, Byron saw a Falklands fox come running towards him and shot it. His crew also killed five of them. Even though called "wolves" by these early explorers, they probably bore a greater resemblance to a fox. Remember, during this era, the wolf was held in horror and hatred in Europe and Great Britain and extirpated with great success. The writings also declared, "They are as big as a mastiff and their fangs are remarkably long and sharp."

In 1813, Captain Charles Barnard piloting the American sealer, Young Nanina, was marooned and starving on Weddell Island. He was lucky enough to capture some seal's flesh, two foxes and three geese. He stated, "I ate some of their [Falklands fox] flesh, but it is so very strong that nothing but the sauce of extreme hunger could force it down."



Falkland Island fox

During the 1830s, hunting for their fur was begun by U.S. fur traders. Charles Darwin arrived in March 1833 and stayed a year. He named the species *Canis antarcticus* and described it as common and tame. He wrote, "The only quadruped native to the island is a large wolf-like fox which is common to both East and West Falkland. I have no doubt it is a peculiar species, and confined to this archipelago because many sealers, gauchos and Indians who have visited these islands all maintain that no such animal is found in any part of South America." Darwin became a psychic when he wrote, "Within a very few years after these islands shall have become regularly settled, in all probability this fox will be classed with the dodo."

In 1839, a bounty was offered and fur trappers killed the Falklands fox in massive numbers. Its thick, dense fur became very fashionable. In the 1860s, Scottish settlers arrived with their sheep. The Falklands fox continued to be poisoned as a pest.

In 1868, the London Zoological Register shows that keeper Adolphe LeComte brought a Falklands fox back to his zoo. In December 1870, another one was recorded, which was half of a pair sent by a Mr. Byng, who was the acting colonial secretary of the Falklands. Byng wrote, "The animal, formerly so common, has now become almost extinct on the Falklands, the depredations it commits upon the Sheep (sic) having rendered its extirpation necessary." The last known Falklands fox was shot in 1876, a mere 43 years after Darwin's visit. To date, it is the only known canid to become extinct in historical times.

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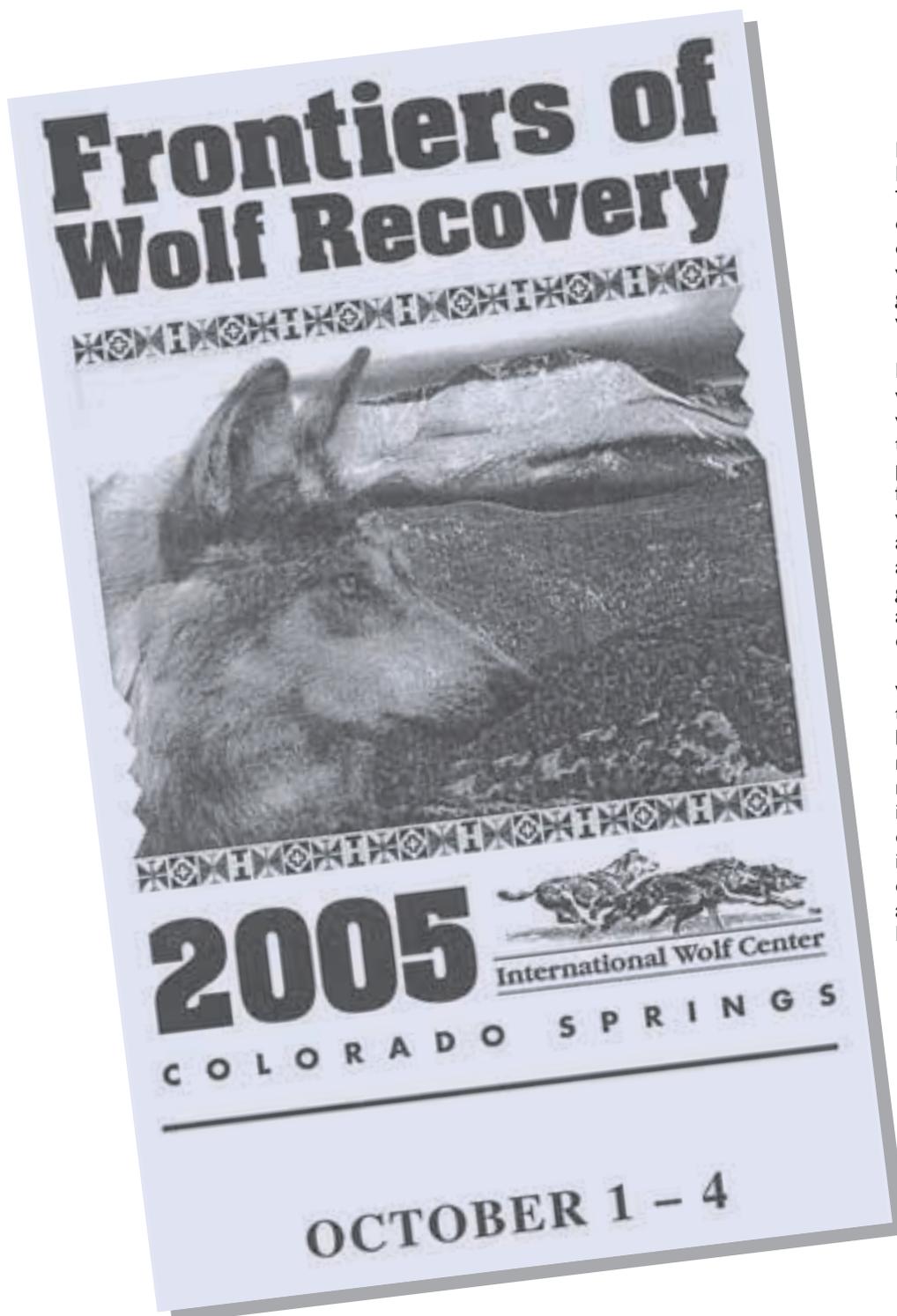
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Frontiers of Wolf Recovery

International Wolf Centre Conference
Colorado Springs – 1 to 4 October 2005

by Denise Taylor



I had been looking forward all year to the IWC conference in Colorado Springs. These events are always a great opportunity to catch up with people who, over the steadily increasing years of working in wolf conservation, have become good friends and staunch allies in our worthy cause.

The conference was organised by the International Wolf Centre (IWC) who work tirelessly for the conservation of wolves. On this occasion they brought together scientists, livestock producers, people from Native American tribes, federal and state wildlife representatives, wolf lovers and antagonists, educators and advocates. Colorado is beautiful setting, and although a lack of time meant I didn't get to see too much of the surrounding area, it is nevertheless always an uplifting experience to be in the Rockies.

The IWC are very keen on helping wolves through education, and it was great to see that a special Educators' Day had been organised. Education is one of the most difficult areas of wolf conservation to negotiate because of the complexities involved. Wolf conservation organisations do tend to work and co-operate on an international basis and understand the enormous variables involved in trying to articulate what education is all about. Education programmes in one country will be completely different to those in other countries. The socio-economic, political and cultural differences all play a huge part in how education and communication programmes about conservation are implemented and delivered. This conference tackled some of these issues.

One of the highlights of the Educators' Day was a role play exercise organised by Bobbie Holaday. 'Get the Connection' was a mock state wildlife commission meeting with 'actors'

playing the roles of people often involved in such meetings: ranchers, hunters, commissioners, animal rights activists, and so on. Although it was great fun to take part in this exercise, it also had a very serious message both about the importance of education, demonstrating one of the many ways of delivery, and about the nature of such meetings in determining policy. There were some great actors who played their parts very convincingly. Having never been to a state wildlife commission meeting, I was later told that some of the outlandish things that were said in the role play were a true representation of some of the things that are actually said at these meetings.

As usual, at these conferences it is necessary to run concurrent sessions, which means you inevitably get to miss some of the good stuff going on. Therefore I can only give a flavour of the conference and report on some of the sessions I attended, all of which were great presentations and most of which gave food for thought.

Suzanne Stone has been a wolf conservationist for many years and as a representative for the Northern Rockies at Defenders of Wildlife she works very closely with ranchers in her region. As well as the compensation schemes, for which Defenders are well known, she also liaises with ranchers on livestock protection. A large part of her remit is centred on education and also on communication. Often Suzanne is called on by the media to provide information about what is happening in her region. At Suzanne's session there were two ranchers present, both of whom gave positive presentations about how wolves are currently fitting into their daily lives. Although most ranchers are not out and out wolf advocates, some are now starting to demonstrate a little more tolerance of predators. This is largely because barriers between the different groups are starting to be broken down, and there is a sense of compromise on both sides.

Bill Lynn chaired a session on bringing bioethics to carnivore conservation and which considers both the intrinsic value of individual animals as well as the relationship and value of the individual to the larger whole. Camilla Fox and Michael Nelson both presented on this topic, followed by an open discussion.

Dorothy McLeer and her colleagues at the Timber Wolf Alliance venture out into the wilds each year on their Hunter Outreach programme. The intrepid volunteers brave the elements, rough terrain and potentially dangerous situations in order to present wolves in a more positive light to hunters. Their aim is to provide factual information at the point where it matters most – out in the 'bush',

during hunting season, where they reach over 1,000 hunters annually. They believe that their non-confrontational approach makes all the difference, and they have had some positive results.

Dr Jhala presented his findings on ecological data from 10 wolf packs in three geographical areas in India which differ in prey type, prey density and socioeconomic conditions. Although there is still persecution of wolves in India, there is also a higher level of tolerance than in other countries. I always find Dr Jhala's presentations hugely fascinating because they offer a picture of wolf conservation that is unique in its context. One example is that the Indian communities in his area of study are largely vegetarian, and many of the livestock animals die naturally and are the carcasses are then left on the outskirts of the villages. This provides food for many different species of animals. This is in complete contrast to many other countries where livestock production is for food for human consumption.

Oliver Matla from the German Wolf Association reported that in spring 2000, for the first time in 150 years, wolf pups were born in Germany. The breeding pair settled down on a military base which inadvertently offered them a higher level of protection. Oliver is a real whizz with computers, and his presentation gave the audience a very graphic presentation of the progress of the two packs that had formed, and how pack members later dispersed. The wolf population in Germany is still very fragile, and their future uncertain, but it has been an encouraging start. Oliver will be writing a full report for Wolf Print in the next issue (No. 26).

A number of biologists from Scandinavian countries were at the conference. Erkki Pulliainen has been studying wolves in Finland since the early 1960s – a time when wolf conservation was unheard of. Even today, wolf conservation in Finland is still opposed at the highest levels. This was one presentation that didn't rely on the wonders of modern technology and PowerPoint, and instead relied on Erkki's knowledge, experience and wisdom which made his talk a powerful and memorable one. Olof

Liberg works for the Grimso Research Station in Sweden. One of the main concerns is the inbreeding situation. The population is based on only three founders and this is obviously affecting the genetic viability of wolves in Sweden. Both Erkki and Olof spoke about this subject which has only been slightly alleviated by the migration of wolves from Finland to Sweden, which has literally brought 'fresh blood' into the wolf population.

Although it is necessary for concurrent sessions to be run in order to fit everything in, it is nevertheless a pity to miss so many other excellent presentations. My apologies to Wolf Print readers for the obvious gaps, and also to conservation colleagues whose presentations are not mentioned. Further information about the conference is on the IWC website so please pay it a visit at www.wolf.org.

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone at IWC for organising such a great event. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole conference, including all the socialising that inevitably takes place when everyone gets together.





Volunteer Program at Alladale, Scotland

by Dominic Earl

For the past few years I have been a 'weekend conservationist' helping out at the UK Wolf Conservation Trust and getting involved in the odd local ranger led projects.

For 2005 I decided that whilst this was all well and good I needed to get out into the world and see first hand what was happening. I started out gently in January going to see the Anglian Wolf Society, then Wildwood in Kent - where the parents of the UK Wolf Conservation Trust's European wolves are.

In March I made my first trip out into the world of wolves with a visit to a group called 'Association for Nature Wolf', in Poland, where I spent three and a half days attending lectures and snow-shoeing in the Beskidy Mountains in search of large carnivores (lynx and wolves).

My main trip for the year though was a two week visit to the Alladale Estate, near Inverness, in Scotland.

I first became aware of Alladale in December 2004 when I found a news article about Paul Lister and his vision of creating Europe's first 'Wilderness Reserve'.

His goal is to create an area of around 50,000 acres which will be fenced in. Within this enclosure predator and prey will live side by side and ancient fauna will be re-established, in particular the Scots pine that used to cover the hills and valleys.

In order to achieve this there is a lot of work that needs doing. Apart from buying the estate Paul has already spent in excess of £500,000 renovating the main Alladale Lodge to four star quality service in order to provide an increased income on this traditional Highland sporting estate.

There is going to be a vast change in life style for some of the people who have traditionally worked the estate. The ghillies who currently take visitors out stalking to shoot the deer with rifles will become rangers and take visitors out to shoot through a camera lens.

The staffing levels have already risen from 3 to 12 and when the project is in full flow it is estimated that at least 100 people will be directly employed by the Estate. There will also be local spin off in requirements for facilities for visitors such as guest houses, eateries and other facilities.

Staying at the main Alladale lodge is not affordable for the vast majority of people, however to give people with an interest in what they are trying to achieve an affordable option they have created the Eco Volunteer Program.

The cost per two weeks was only £100 in 2005, though this may go up next year along with an advisory age limit of around 35, and with low cost airlines flying to Inverness it is a great way to see a magnificent part of the Highlands.

I arrived at Inverness airport and was met by Chris, the volunteer program leader, we then had to go and do some shopping for basics and pick up another volunteer from the station before heading up to Bonner Bridge to meet the third volunteer, who had already been there for two weeks.

Once we were all together it was time to head up to Alladale lodge, in a by now rather crowded Renault Cleo. This is around a 15 mile journey from Ardgay up a single track road. Once you leave the village you are soon driving through managed forests of spruce. Around 2/3rds of the way to Alladale you go over a cattle grid and then on to a gravel track.

It was a shame that we arrived in the dark as we did not get to see the impressive façade of the main lodge, but drove around the back to change our transport to something more suitable – a Land Rover.

The next part of the journey, whilst only 7 miles, takes around a half hour over a very bumpy track as we head out to Deanich lodge. Deanich is thought to be the remotest regularly inhabited building, its nearest neighbour being Alladale.

We would get to know this road very well travelling it at least twice a day, if not more.



Late on that evening we arrived at Deanich and were given a tour. The lodge is very comfortable with a large lounge with cast iron stove fireplace, a dining room, kitchen, 5 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, shower room, drying room and log store.

One of the most important rooms is probably the log store. At Deanich there is no central heating, in fact it only got electricity (produced from a generator) at some point during August. This means that in order to keep warm you have to light the fire in the lounge and in order to have hot water for a bath you need to stoke the boiler in the drying room. All the wood has to be brought in from elsewhere though as, in the morning I got my first view of the glen and, there was not a tree in sight.

A typical day consisted of getting up around 7am. Having breakfast and preparing your packed lunch then heading back down the track to Alladale lodge to find out what would be happening for the day. We would then go out for the day to perform a task and then return to Deanich at any time from 3pm to 6:30pm. Upon return we would split into various tasks. One to start the lounge fire someone else the fire in the boiler for hot water. The other two would go to get the dinner started.

Half of the time was spent helping with the deer management. Alladale estate, along with most of Scotland, suffers from a massive over population of deer. The result of this is that any large vegetation has very little chance to grow. Any new trees or bushes are soon grazed and the few old trees standing around are mostly too old to produce seeds now. The few areas where



there are trees are either fenced off to the deer or are on steep ravines where the deer do not go.

Helping with the deer management took one of two forms. One was to go out accompanying the ghillie and the guests whilst they were stalking the deer and then 'dragging' the deer back down the hill to be collected. This is as it sounds, literally dragging the deer using a rope.

The second is helping with the two Scottish ponies, Sim and Sruban. You would either walk them up the glen to wait at the bottom for the deer to be dragged down, or take them up to the ridge at the top to collect the deer depending on where the ghillie thought they would stalk that day.

The deer management is vital to the survival of the Estate, guests pay a lot of money to come stalking and the deer are then sold on to a butcher afterwards. It is also required to be able to reduce the numbers of deer enough to reduce the over grazing to allow the fauna to recover. It is very physically demanding though not only physically, but mentally too as you are out in all weathers including the cold and very wet.

Other days were spent doing more preparation work for what is to be happening next year. We spent time reading papers on highland cattle, small mammals, local fauna and other topics related to the development of the Estate. Having group discussions, led by Chris, about the types of things that need to be done before the herbivores arrive – hopefully in the middle of next year once a trial area of around a thousand acres has been fenced off.

We also went out into the field and did field work too.

One of the projects currently being undertaken is the removal of deer fencing, it may seem strange but the overall the impact of this project will be to reduce the fencing density in the area! Estate owners have to feed the deer on their estates in the



Volunteers Michael, Dominic and Carol

winter as the deer are no longer able to make their migration to the coastal regions due to the large amounts of fencing in the Scottish countryside and also the road system.

For the lodges they are also considering the feasibility of a hydro-electric scheme. One of our jobs was to track up the proposed stream and to make several transects to measure the flow and depth of the river and gully.

Once we had done this flow, we went down into the valley to the River Alladale and did the same again. This river will be within the fenced test area and it is important to get some base data now so that it can be compared over time once the animals are reintroduced.

One day was spent restoring a path – it is one that the horses in the valley to help with deer collection. We had to collect large rocks, then stones and finally gravel from a local river bed to make the path up.

Another day was spent out in search of the highland cattle. Alladale has four Highland Cattle in one of their small forested areas. The idea is to see what effect they will have on the fauna in that area. Studies have shown that cattle in low density are very beneficial to the fauna in the forest and also to the small-mammal populations that live there too.

Cattle are a lot less destructive than deer and sheep as their bulbous lips and solid upper pallet means they are not able to graze the vegetation so close to the ground as animals which have both upper and lower teeth. The result is that vegetation gets 'tugged' aerating the soil much more effectively. The cattle also make paths through the vegetation about twice the width of those made by deer, resulting in movement corridors for small birds and mammals.

Whilst out looking for the cattle we made observations of the local vegetation, the damage that had been done to trees both by cattle and deer, and took GPS readings of locations of paths which we believed the cattle were making.

The evenings were very sociable. Once we had all sat down and had dinner then done the washing up we would adjourn to the lounge where we always had a nice fire going and would chat, read, play cards or watch a DVD.

Overall I do not think my original expectations for the eco-volunteer project were met. I had hoped to learn a lot more about what conservation was being undertaken, methods of management and feel as though I was doing something that was a real contribution. This is due to the fact the project is still very much in its infancy. I believe that next year will see a much more structured approach to volunteer activities with the main project to fence in approximately 1,000 acres for the introduction of red deer (in restricted numbers), roe deer, wild boar and elk.



Would I recommend the Alladale Eco-Volunteer program to others, absolutely.

I for one will certainly be going back year-on-year to see how the project is coming on. It is a fantastic way to see some spectacular highland scenery, see how a traditional hunting estate is run and be part of a historic step to introduce sustainable eco tourism to the highlands. All of this at a very reasonable price!

For more information about Alladale visit – <http://www.alladale.com>

To find out about the Eco Volunteer Project you can contact Christopher Sandom on c.sandom@alladale.com, telephone: 01863 755 338

Dates for eco-volunteer project in 2006 start in April

Next year there will be an advisory age limit of 35 but more important you do need to be reasonably physically fit – there are very steep hills to climb!

Full details of my trips and visits can be found on my website at <http://wolf.cinimod.co.uk> along with pictures of the Trust's wolves.

Editor's Note

The project at Alladale is a fascinating one and has certainly generated a lot of interest and media attention. Whether the long term aim of fencing off large tracts of land to house large carnivores will materialise remains to be seen. There are many obstacles to be overcome, not least of which are the issues surrounding the right to roam in Scotland.

Work has already started on the ecological restoration of the area with the planting of thousands of indigenous trees, but even with a restored ecology the question needs to be asked about what would happen to the animals in the enclosure once they reach carrying capacity thresholds.

These are just two of the many and complex issues surrounding this project. Socio-economic and political factors will also play a role, as well as the opinions of those advocating a full reintroduction of large predators, and especially the wolf.

If you have any thoughts or comments on the Alladale Project, then we would love to hear from you. Please address your letters to the Editor, Wolf Print Magazine, UKWCT, Butlers Farm, Beenham, Reading RG7 5NT, or email to: denise.taylor@btinternet.com



Inspired by Nature Festival

8th and 9th October 2005

Arley Hall, Cheshire

*by Denise Taylor
Photos: Chris Senior*



The UK Wolf Conservation Trust attended the Inspired by Nature Festival at Arley Hall in October with wolves Duma and Dakota.

The festival, organised by Education 4 Conservation, was a great success and its aim was to reconnect people with nature through the arts. John Denness and Rich Watts from the UKWCT gave presentations over the weekend on the Lost Beasts of Britain. As always, their presentation was entertaining. Duma and Dakota, ever the stage queens, demonstrated what wolves can be like in real life and close up; hopefully dispelling some of the myths that still abound in the UK about the ferocity of wolves.

There was lots to see and do all weekend from watching birds of prey to twisting twigs to make sculptures. There was lots of music and theatre, visual art and storytelling galore.

Despite the bad weather on the Saturday, everyone had a great time. The wolves proved to be a great attraction. The pictures on this and the opposite page give a flavour of the festival, and some of the attractions there.

Don't miss the next festival which will be held in September 2006 at Newnham Paddox Art Park in Warwickshire. Keep an eye on the website at www.ukwolf.org or www.education4conservation.org.



Inspired by Nature Festival

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