

The magazine of The UK Wolf Conservation Trust, published quarterly

# WolfPrint

Issue 21 Autumn 2004





# WolfPrint

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

Editor  
Denise Taylor  
Tel: 024 7626 4326  
e-mail: [denisetaylor@ntlworld.com](mailto:denisetaylor@ntlworld.com)

Editorial Team  
Julia Ford, Andrew Matthews, Gwynne Power,  
Sue Sefscik

Contributors to this issue:  
Pat Adams, Lise Donnez, Mohammed S Farhadinia,  
Kaveh Hatami, John D C Linnell, Jorgelina Marino,  
Alistair Nelson, Kirsty Peake, Deborah Randall

Design Team: Phil Dee Tel: 01788 546565  
Stephanie Balbo, Paul Swainson

Patrons  
Desmond Morris  
Erich Klinghammer  
Christoph Promberger

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

The UK Wolf Conservation Trust is a company  
limited by guarantee. Registered in England &  
Wales. Company No. 3686061

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not  
necessarily those of the publishers or The UK Wolf  
Conservation Trust.

All rights reserved through the world. Reproduction in any  
manner, in whole or in part, in English or other languages,  
prohibited. This work may not be photocopied or otherwise  
reproduced within the terms of any license granted by the  
Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd or the Publishers Licensing  
Society Ltd.

## 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.

Cover price: £3.00  
Subscription rates (incl P&P):  
United Kingdom: £14.00 (non-members);  
£12.00 (UKWCT members).  
Rest of world: £16.00 (non-members);  
£14.00 (UKWCT members).

# E ditorial



The hot topic of wolf reintroduction to Scotland is once again in the media. Millionaire businessman, Paul Lister, has purchased a large estate in the Highlands and aims to bring back the British "big five" – the grey wolf, bear, lynx, European bison, and boar.

Although not technically a full reintroduction, the animals released will be able to roam a relatively large area covering some 60,000 acres. Paul, a keen conservationist, wants to see the land and its resources put to a different use; returning the estate to a wilder habitat with more diversity of flora as well as the fauna he intends to release.

Paul's greatest obstacle will be negative attitudes fuelled by the fear of the unknown and the perceived risks associated with large predators. Sadly we now live in such a risk-averse society; one where schools are less inclined to take children on adventure trips, and horse-riding schools are closing because parents are becoming increasingly litigious. We continually seek ways to make our lives safer and more comfortable and our environments more sterile, which often means eradicating those things that we think are a threat to our wellbeing.

Paradoxically we have a tendency to eradicate the natural things in our world, which are often not a threat at all, whilst proliferating the man-made things such as synthetic chemicals, cars, aeroplanes, mobile phones, computers, – things that are proven to be a danger to our health and safety. For example, we perceive all bacteria as being dangerous, which is not the case at all, and employ an arsenal of carcinogenic chemicals to rid ourselves of them.

In the USA and Britain ridding ourselves of large predators has led to areas of land being stripped bare by ungulates, which in turn has led to a decline in other species no longer capable of being supported by their habitat. Recent studies are starting to show that Yellowstone Park is recovering ecologically following the reintroduction of wolves, which has changed the behaviour patterns of ungulates and in turn has affected the capacity for flora to regenerate.

This regeneration is Paul's dream, and it is about much more than reintroducing charismatic animals. It is about living on a healthy planet that is rich in biodiversity. We have to accept that life is a risky business. It is the threat of danger that keeps species healthy (including humans) not sterility and safety, which only engender weakness and frailty.

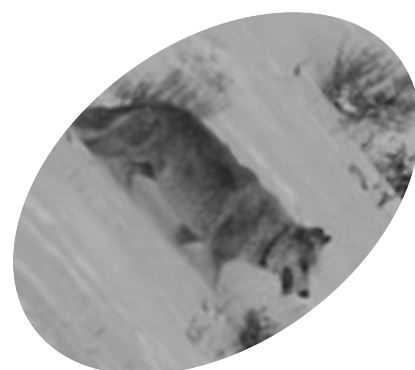
Personally, I would rather live with large predators present, than live in a sterile and empty world, which ultimately is a far greater threat to the survival of the human species.

DTaylor

PICTURE CREDITS: Front Cover - Geoffery Gersie  
and Alex Hampson



WolfPrint is printed on re-cycled paper. Printed by Colorco. Coventry (024) 7671 1005



## Inside this issue...



Wolves of the World



Wolves and bears in France –  
a gloomy future



Food Preference of the Grey Wolf in  
Karkas Hunting Prohibited Area, Iran



Controversial origins: a story of  
wolves, conspiracy, black helicopters  
and things that go bump in the night



UK Wolf Conservation Trust  
Autumn Seminar October 2004



Highland gods: Ethiopian wolves'  
perilous existence in Afroalpine  
enclaves



Ethiopia's Bale Mountains  
National Park



A Year of Change for the Druids  
in Yellowstone



Book Review





## EUROPE

### Croatia

#### Shepherds Despair as Wolves Thrive in Croatia

ZAGVOZD, Croatia (Reuters) - The state has made them a protected species, but shepherds say Croatia's wolves are living up to their storybook reputation as the bad guys.

Wolves roaming rural Croatia are preying on sheep and goats while enjoying more rights than livestock owners.

A simple example sums up the problem: If a shepherd kills a wolf, he faces a 40,000 kuna (\$6,800) fine. But if the wolf kills a sheep from your flock, the state pays only 500 kuna, with some delay and only if a state-appointed expert confirms it was a case of lupine wrongdoing.

Shepherds in this remote village in the southern Dalmatia region, separated from the touristy Adriatic coast by Mount Biokovo, say they have had their fill of wolf attacks. The situation is the same in much of rural Croatia.

Hardly a day goes by without a newspaper report of wolves killing sheep, goats or dogs, almost literally before their owners' eyes, prompting demands for a reduction of their number.

Ivica Brnas owns 45 sheep and goats, four cows and a horse, guarded by two well-trained sheep dogs. He recently had a

close encounter with wolves that swooped on his flock from nearby slopes.

"I yelled and threw rocks to chase them away. I have become frightened of going into the woods with the livestock. We only go when more of us get together," the 55-year-old said.

"In the old days, wolves came down only in the winter. They were afraid of cowbells and humans. Now they come all the time and are not afraid at all," he said.

Source:

By Zoran Radosavljevic

#### Wolves Thrive

Josip Kolak of the Zagreb Veterinarian Faculty, who oversees the national wolf management program, said gray wolves (*Canis Lupus*) had been exterminated in most of Western Europe. "Their only chance is if we preserve them."

But he said there were many conflicting interests at stake. "The state and environmentalists are on one side, hunters and shepherds on the other. It is difficult to find a solution that would please everyone."

Kolak said the former Yugoslav republic -- where the wolf became a protected species in 1995 -- was home to up to 170 wolves, considerably more than before its 1991-95 war of independence.

"For some reason, the number of wolves always rises after a war, perhaps because people are too busy killing each other to pay attention to wolves," he said.

In addition, some wolves may have come from neighboring Bosnia, where they are still a prized target for hunters.

Croatia is actively engaged in several European wildlife projects aiming to protect big carnivores - the wolf, brown bear and lynx - all still found here.

Most wolves inhabit the rugged mountains and forests in central Croatia, reaching almost to the Adriatic coast. As part of the project, Kolak tries to tag them and monitor their behavior in the wild.

#### Intelligent Predators

Ivica Buljubasic, a veteran hunter from Zagvozd, does the same in his own free time. He says he knows all wolf trails in the area, says he can think like a wolf and even howl like one.

He said the last wolf killed by hunters in the area was in 1975, when there were only one or two wolves on the prowl. Now there are three or four packs operating in the relatively small area of Mount Biokovo and around Zagvozd.

"This is way too much, but the fact that there are so many of them here means they know they are not in danger and there is enough food. However, they've become a threat and a nuisance."

A passionate student of nature and wildlife, Buljubasic said the wolves were more intelligent than humans might believe.

"They are perfect predators, always scouring their territory and knowing exactly where to find food. These wolves are also behaving differently, they are getting used to civilization and eat everything, dogs, cats, carcasses."

State veterinary expert Boris Sabic said part of the problem was in the traditional loose shepherding that still survives on the slopes of Mount Biokovo.

"A lot of livestock roam free, without supervision and out in the open and that is ideal easy prey for wolves. But a lot of farmers protect their cattle and have dogs, and yet they are attacked," Sabic said.

Despite all that, Kolak said the wolf never attacks humans and should be regarded as an asset, not a marauder.

"However, you cannot sell that line to shepherds," he said. "We must create a situation in which shepherds can also benefit from the wolf's presence, because of tourists coming to see the wolf in the wild."

Source:

[http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/nm/20041114/lfnm/croatia\\_wolf\\_dc\\_1](http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/nm/20041114/lfnm/croatia_wolf_dc_1)





### Italy Long journey of the lone wolf

A GREY wolf that was returned to the wild after being hit by a car has covered 1,000km (620 miles) in the past nine months while making its way from northern Italy to the French Alps, say researchers who have tracked it with a radio satellite device.

Paolo Ciucci, lecturer in zoology at the Department of Human and Animal Biology at Rome University, said that signals from the travelling wolf showed that it had reached the French national park of Mercantour, which lies between the Côte d'Azur and the southern Alps. The distance is 350 kilometres as the crow flies, but the wolf's route meant that it had covered three times that far.

Willy Reggiani, head of Life Natura, an EU-backed wildlife conservation project in Emilia Romagna, said the experiment began last February when the 11-month-old male cub was found injured beside the ringroad west of Parma. Gianmaria Pisani, a veterinary surgeon who examined it, said that it would almost certainly have died if passing motorists had not called park rangers.

The cub was named Ligabue after Antonio Ligabue, a painter and sculptor who specialised in wild animals and whose works are on show at a museum in Parma.

As the wolf recovered, the Emilia Romagna conservationists and zoologists from Rome University attached a radio collar to it. After final health checks and a hearty breakfast of wild boar and

roeibuck, Ligabue — by now weighing 28kg — was turned loose on a snowy morning in March between the Cisa and Lagastrello passes high in the Parco dei Cento Laghi (Park of a Hundred Lakes) in the Appenines near Parma.

Signor Ciucci said that the scientists monitoring the wolf's progress had held their breath for the first few days as they watched the signals from the global positioning satellite on Ligabue's collar.

In the past, radio-tagged wolves have rarely travelled more than 50km, Signor Ciucci told the newspaper Corriere della Sera. For the first four days, he said, Ligabue was disorientated, and did not stray far. Then the cub moved off westwards along the crest of

the Appenines on the border between Emilia and Tuscany. It crossed and recrossed motorways, stopping for several days in the Lunigiana area near La Spezia before travelling into Liguria behind Rapallo, Genoa and Savona.

Eventually Ligabue crossed the Italian Maritime Alps to a nature reserve in the Pesio Valley, in Cuneo province, and stayed there with resident wolves for a while before crossing into France at the end of September.

"I think he is still looking for a new life," Signor Ciucci said. "He will eventually find his social niche. But he is very young in wolf terms. It is rare that wolves start thinking of settling down until they are two years old."







The battery in the tracking device is expected to last until July.

There are an estimated 500-600 grey wolves in Italy. They are protected but are often poisoned by farmers and shepherds to protect stock.

Source:  
Richard Owen,  
The Times - 23 November 2004

### Norway SMS technology keeps wild wolf on the map

Oslo - Norwegian researchers have recently used cellphone text messaging for the first time to track a young wolf that crossed the border from neighbouring Sweden.

The wolf is tagged with a transmitter that transmits short text messages whenever the animal is near a cellphone communication antenna.

"Via the SMS messages we receive, we can locate where the wolf is, and we also get a time log," researcher Petter Wabakken told public broadcaster NRK.

The technology is cheap and enables the researchers to track the wolf which roams a large area, Wabakken said.

The wolf has covered about 1 000km since it left Sweden in early June.

According to Wabakken most wolves roam about 100-300km, but researchers are not sure how many roam longer distances.

Young wolves which roam great distances are thought to constitute the largest danger to tame animals like sheep.

The tagged wolf has killed sheep and a request to shoot it has been filed to authorities in the county of Nordland that straddles the Arctic Circle. - Sapa-dpa

Source:  
[http://iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=31&art\\_id=qw1092820863117B256](http://iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=31&art_id=qw1092820863117B256)

### Scotland Call of the wild

IT IS more than 250 years since the lonely howl of the wolf has echoed in the farthest reaches of the Highlands, but if Paul Lister gets his way, that will soon change.

The millionaire businessman wants to transform his estate in Sutherland and Easter Ross into a

home for not only the European grey wolf, but also the bear, lynx, boar and European bison which were once native to this land.

Lister's vision is a conservationist's dream and, in his own words, one of the "most sensational, inbound eco-tourism opportunities the Highlands have ever seen."

Others, less sympathetic, might dismiss it as a furry-animal Jurassic Park.

But whatever the objections Lister will face in bringing this cast of characters to a fenced wilderness on his Alladale estate, nobody could accuse his project of smacking of the fly-by-night.

"I've been thinking about it for 15 years and looking for somewhere like Alladale for seven years," says Lister, who purchased the 153-square-mile estate last year.

As he sits in the lodge at Alladale, 12 miles west of Bonar Bridge, and within sight of some of the most northerly Caledonian pinewoods in the country, you sense Lister has waited long enough. "I'd like to think we could achieve something within the next five years," he says. "The habitat is perfect for these animals and we could do most of the reintroduction within a 12-month period, from the minute the perimeter fence went up."

Whether Lister will be allowed to forge ahead at this pace is in doubt - and he knows it. Scottish Natural Heritage's attempts of the past eight years to introduce the relatively "cuddly" European beaver to Scotland has been fraught with minority, but vocal, opposition from forestry and farming interests.

What the wider community will make of his plans to reintroduce Scotland's "big five" is not yet fully clear - but some commentators believe he faces a Herculean task in convincing all those with a legitimate interest that his dream is a good idea.

Aware of this, Lister held a conference at Alladale with those who might be affected by his plans. This included neighbouring landowners, deer management groups, local small farmers, estate workers other interested agencies - people he will need to convince if his dream is to be realised.

Speaking to The Scotsman ahead of the event, he

was resolutely upbeat, though realistic.

"The community seems to be adopting the idea, and that's even before I've had the chance explain it fully," he said. "Obviously, it would be silly of me to go ahead prematurely."

"So far there's been nothing negative, but I don't suppose it'll be too long before someone has something to say."

Lister is the son of Noel Lister, the co-founder of the MFI furniture empire, but at the age of 45, he has put the retail trade behind him. Although he maintains a family business based in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, he now spends at least a week every month at Alladale.

Much of the remainder of his time is spent visiting conservation areas and game parks across the world, particularly, Transylvania, where the pristine forested landscape of the Romanian Carpathian mountains boasts the highest concentration of sizeable carnivores anywhere in Europe.

It is here that much of his conservation credentials have been honed - and those which could bring a tourism boost to Alladale, should his plans succeed. For the past few years he has been active in the Carpathian Large Carnivore Project, helping it to develop a viable "eco-tourism" business.

He has also forged links with the Mantis Collection, a South African organisation which combines running two game reserves, Shamwari and Sanbona, with quality tourism.

Lister has also looked to South Africa for expert advice on the kind of secure fence that will encircle much of his estate: "There they've been used to controlling the 'big five'. If they can do that in Africa, I would have thought we could contain slightly-lesser creatures."

He laughs. "In this day and age, when they can put someone on the moon, they can surely build a fence to keep a bear in."

Lister hopes that this fence, his "halfway-house" approach will be key to convincing the wider Scottish community to welcome the wolves and other beasts back to Scotland.

"I'm not advocating a general reintroduction, but a controlled one, and that's what's important," he says.

But his plans for Alladale are about much more than putting some of our native animals back onto the hills.

His vision is based on what he calls the "four Es" - "environmental restoration, educational enhancement, economic viability and employment opportunities," and he adds a fifth, "to enhance cultural heritage."

Lister sees Alladale marrying conservation with "green tourism" in Scotland. Instead of travelling all the way to Africa to spot the much-vaunted "Big Five" of elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo and rhino, visitors will be able to watch a Scottish "Big Five" of wolf, bear, boar, lynx and bison.

He believes his animal park could create at least 30 local jobs, and he points to the economic spin-off associated with America's Yellowstone, or the "wolf howlers" who escort enthusiasts in Alaska.

He is due to travel to New Jersey to visit the Willow Schools, based on holistic education, which he extols for their inclusion on the curriculum of topics such as environmental issues and ethics. Within six months, he says he hopes to have an educational unit, informed by these values, established on the estate.

In the meantime, he maintains rather more traditional deer-stalking at Alladale, although he himself is no longer a shooter. "I shot many deer in my twenties, but I've grown out of that and I want to see a bigger picture. I believe there is something bigger out there we're all missing."

Lister is not the first to advocated the reintroduction of wolves in the Highlands or islands - among them the late David Stephen, for many years a widely-respected nature writer for The Scotsman, who kept a pair of wolves in an enclosure on his pioneering, Palacerigg Countryside Park, near Cumbernauld. Others, however, believe that to bring the wolf or other vanished species back to a landscape which has been vastly transformed, and settled, in the ensuing centuries, is simply inappropriate.

George Anderson, a spokesman for Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) believes that among many hurdles, Lister's greatest could be public opinion.





"We've had people in the past suggesting this kind of thing, but they've never done anything. This is the first such idea I've come across in my time at SNH where the guy seems to be serious and has some credentials. So, we're taking it seriously and there will be discussions."

Anderson points to SNH's own proposals for the reintroduction of the European beaver to Scotland by way of a warning about the power of public opinion in such issues. "Scaling that up to the large carnivores he has in mind, I would hope that his thinking is quite long-term, indeed."

Also looking on with interest is Jeremy Usher Smith, manager of the Highland Wildlife Park, near Kingussie, which keeps a pack of 11 wolves in a purpose-built three-hectare enclosure. Wearing his hat as a zoo inspector for the Scottish Executive, he also sees many practicalities to be overcome.

"You need to meet Health and Safety regulations and all the rest of it, and some sort of management of these animals so they don't roam. It would certainly have to be looked at by the local authority, which would be the licensing authority and it would seek advice from the Scottish Executive."

Despite this, he believes that, effectively, Lister's vision could be feasible. "I don't know the estate or what the habitat is like, but it would be great to bring these animals back, and it would probably help take the fright out of them for some people."

Another problem for Lister may be the recently-legalised "right to roam." If, as of necessity, Alladale becomes securely fenced off, might there be objections from walkers? "We can't keep everyone happy all of the time," Lister says. "If we want to have the benefits of what we're talking about, there will have to be some compromises. But I believe the majority of people wouldn't mind a small area of the Highlands given over to this kind of use."

Bearing in mind the sort of money it could bring the area, compromise might not be too hard to find in some quarters.

Guests who come to see the dreamed-of Alladale "Big Five" could pay as much as £20,000 for a week at the lodge, and daytrippers will also be welcome. "Everyone will be welcome. If they want a walking tour, that's

possible, but there would be a charge of some sort." Lister headed off to New York immediately after his conference at Alladale, but a spokesman for the estate described the event as "very productive, agreeable and generally positive." Perhaps rather tellingly, there were more questions raised about the impact of traffic on access roads, and tick control, than about "the more emotive issues you might expect", he added.

Traditionally, the last Scottish wolf is said to have been killed - and decapitated, just to make sure - by a Highland hunter called MacQueen in 1743. The bear has been extinct here since the 10th century. Some supporters of reintroduction, such as nature writer Jim Crumley, prefer to believe "that the last wolf in Scotland hasn't been born yet."

Paul would like to think so, too. "I'm completely driven and I've got lots of energy," he says. With the red tape he faces, he may need it.

Source:

By Jim Gilchrist, The Scotsman - 30 November 2004  
<http://news.scotsman.com/features.cfm?id=1374582004>

## Switzerland

### Swiss have wolf in their sights

Switzerland wants to water down the protection given to wolves in Europe, which would allow the animal to be culled.

The Swiss government recently presented its proposal in Strasbourg to fellow signatories to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.

However, countries party to the legal instrument, which is also known as the Bern Convention, said they needed more information on the environmental impact of the wolf before making a decision.

The Swiss authorities want the wolf to be reclassified. The predator currently appears on the list of "Strictly Protected Fauna Species"; Switzerland would like to see it downgraded to a "Protected Fauna Species".

If the proposal were accepted, the wolf would have the same status in Switzerland as the lynx, allowing it to be shot under strict conditions.

An estimated three to six wolves are thought to be present in the country.

Under legislation introduced in

Switzerland in July this year, cantons can issue a licence to kill if 35 farm animals fall prey to a wolf in the course of four months, or 25 animals in one month.

### Extinction fears

Since 1995, 14 wolves have wandered into Swiss territory from France and Italy, according to Pro Natura, Switzerland's largest conservation organisation. It said seven had been killed under licence.

Pro Natura has criticised the Swiss proposal, fearing it could lead to the extinction of the wolf in Europe.

The group has already launched a campaign with the slogan, "Don't let Switzerland kill your wolves!"

Switzerland could find support for its proposal among other parties to the convention, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

Around 12 countries are said to be unsure as to whether the wolf merits complete protection.

The convention aims to protect wild species of flora and fauna in their natural habitats, in particular endangered and vulnerable migratory species.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Nature; Wolves' genetic diversity worryingly low

Nature News, Wolf eradication in the US has had a far more devastating impact on the genetic diversity of remaining populations than previously thought, a new study reveals.

Although wolves were systematically eradicated across North America over the last couple of centuries, it had been thought that the human impact on the Canadian wolf population - which is currently a relatively healthy 70,000 - was minor.

Conservationists therefore assumed that the Canadian population had the same level of genetic diversity that had existed in the 19th century - prior to the mass slaughter - and that small-scale re-introductions of these wolves into the US would lead to diversity on a par with this earlier period.

But these assumptions were wrong, according to researchers from the University of Uppsala,

Sweden, and the University of California Los Angeles, US, who looked at the genetic diversity of the original wolf populations using DNA analysis. They used bone samples taken from grey wolves dating from 1856 - held in the National Museum for Natural History in Washington DC - and compared this genetic diversity with that of modern wolves.

"We found a 43% drop in genetic variability in the modern wolves," said Carles Vila, one of the team. "It is impossible for the wolf populations to recover this important diversity, which enables them to adapt to different environmental challenges."

### Bears and lions

Vila notes: "It takes thousands of years of naturally occurring mutations to build up such diversity. And if the Canadian wolves - with such a large population remaining - have lost so much genetic variation, what is the situation for other endangered species in North America, such as bears or mountain lions?"

Wild wolves from across North America were captured and reintroduced to the Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, US, 10 years ago with considerable success. For example, the population of elk was reduced to more sustainable levels, allowing vegetation to recover.

It was hoped that choosing wolves from across the continent would produce a population with high genetic diversity. But the new research shows this has not happened.

Source:

<http://www.keralanext.com/news/?id=69056>

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



# Wolves and bears in France – a gloomy future...

Following an initiative by the WWF, SPA and FERUS more than 3000 angry and sad French citizens of all ages gathered in Paris on November 6 to protest against the government's recent killing of two young wolves (one male and one female) and the death of Cannelle, the last female bear in France of the pure Pyrenean breed, who was shot illegally by an irresponsible hunter on November 1. Cannelle leaves a small yearling cub behind whose chances for survival are slim.

In parallel 200, wolf defenders protested in Nice and 350 others in Vercors where the she-wolf was shot. A cairn was raised in memory of the 18-month she-wolf at the place of her killing. 250 citizens in the Valley of Aspe, in the Pyrenees, where Cannelle had been killed, had also spontaneously decided to gather in memory of « their » lost bear, the pride of their mountains and cultural heritage.

The idea to organise the demonstration in Paris was launched late this summer following the government's decision to shoot four wolves at random before December 31, 2004.

In France the wolf, the bear and the lynx are all strictly protected by the Bern Convention (signed by France in 1990), the EU's Habitats Directive and local French law. As we all know potential derogations allowing to capture or cull wolves could only possibly be considered when a wolf population is in good conservation status or if there is a recurrent issue with an individual wolf who attacks sheep flocks even when all prevention and protection measures (guarding dogs,



Symbolic wolf funeral ceremony in Vercors on Nov. 6 in memory of the she-wolf of 18 months killed on October 21. Photo: Roger Mathieu.

human presence and night parks) have been put in place, tested and proven ineffective. None of this is the case in France. As such there is no justification whatsoever to kill, capture or cull any wolves. According to the IUCN France needs 20 packs and some 150 wolves to reach a reasonable conservation status. Today France counts some 50 wolves split in 10-12 packs.

Where the she-wolf was killed there had been no incidents of depredation. Moreover all the sheep had left the mountains for the winter period. Only wild sheep were around! The president of the Regional Park of Vercors, where the she-wolf was killed, issued a press release to condemn the useless killing of this wolf and reminded that the Park had been proactively co-funding and implementing successful protection measures in collaboration with the farmers. As a result there had been a significant decrease in wolf attacks (292 sheep killed in 2002 against 176 in 2004). Moreover the Vercors region starts to see the beginning of a real eco-tourism because of the known, permanent presence of the wolves.

The co-habitation between humans and wolves is of course possible also in France. The French government has for the past 5 years provided sufficient budget and resources to accompany and support the farmers who understand that wolves and bears have the right to live in our mountains as well and that new ways of doing things are necessary. To that effect one of FERUS' key field activities is *Pastoraloup*, an eco-voluntary programme whose prime goal is to establish a dialogue between ecologists and farmers to improve the latters' acceptance of wolves. The eco-voluntaries help protect the flocks against attacks during the summer grazing in the mountains. *Pastoraloup* is co-sponsored by WWF and the SPA.

"The wolf and bear demonstration on Saturday 6 November was a resounding success. It is the first time in French history that so many environment and wildlife associations gathered to publicly protest against the government's neglect of wolf and bear conservation in our country", said Lise Donnez, Wolf Coordinator, FERUS, "But this is only the beginning. We still have a long way to go. We have engaged in an important public debate. Killing wolves is not going to solve the problem of the French sheep farming. It has other economic problems that have nothing to do with wolves", she continued, "Now we need to keep momentum and put pressure on the government to deliver a long-term reconversion plan for the ailing, over-subsidized \*sheep farming, instil a priority for wildlife in the national and regional parks, launch systematic lawsuits against poachers and deliver a real conservation plan for wolves that is acceptable to all parties involved. It is about time that we, the citizens, are heard", Lise Donnez concluded.

*\*France has 9 million sheep. More than 700,000 of them are "reconverted" every year (read : ends in slaughter-house because the farmers cease their activity). Sheep farming in France is subsidized by approx. 60%. Since the natural return of the wolf in France in 1992 approx. 10,000 sheep have been killed by wolves (or "large canids"). If there is any doubt (wolf or dog) it is always decided that it is a wolf because this allows the farmer to be reimbursed for the damage. Officially more than 250,000 sheep die every year because of attacks by stray dogs.*



Cairn raised for the she-wolf of 18 months killed on October 21 in the Vercors. Photo: Roger Mathieu.



### Facts and figures – wolves in France:

- 1990:** France signs the Bern Convention.
- 1992:** After 100 years of absence, the first wolves (*canis lupus italicus*) reappear in France (National Park of Mercantour in Southern Alps) from Italy.
- 1995:** A public opinion survey concludes that 80% of the French population is in favour of the presence of wolves in France.
- 2002:** The French government creates an official work-group to conduct throughout 6 months hearings with interest groups, biologists, citizens, farmers and others concerned with wolves to determine in what conditions wolves and farmers could co-habit. Hidden objectives of the Commission are to prove :
  - 1) the wolf was reintroduced in France and hence no right to be protected
  - 2) the wolf is dangerous for humans.
 None of these objectives could of course be reached, but a doubt was left that the wolf « may however have been reintroduced » even though there was no scientific evidence.
- 2003:** Conclusion of work group's report : "Predators and farming in the mountains : priority to humans". NB : This conclusion does not reflect the content of the almost 1000 pages that summarize all the hearings.
- 2003:** Late in the year, a 6-month working group is launched by the government (led by the Ministry of Ecology and Ministry of Agriculture) to come up with a first recommendation for a "Wolf Action Plan" in France. WWF,



Dear Santa Claus, For X-mas I would like animals in plush in my room and real animals in nature. Thanks, Julian. Photo: Pascal Farcy & Louisa Mathelin.

Paris wolf and bear protest manifestation on Nov. 6. Symbolic bear coffin in souvenir of Cannelle, illegally killed by a hunter on Nov. 1. Photo: Pascal Farcy & Louisa Mathelin.



Paris wolf and bear protest manifestation on Nov. 6. Symbolic ceremony to show that killing of wolves is unacceptable. Photo: Pascal Farcy & Louisa Mathelin.

FNE and FERUS participate in the discussions. However, it is quickly understood that the objective of the influential Ministry of Agriculture is to find a way to eliminate wolves with a good alibi. Hence the ONCFS (National Office for Hunting and Wildlife) proposed using model conclusions developed by university scientists whereby one could reduce the current population by 10% without any conservation danger, as long as management is adaptive and no zoning is enforced at all. The Ministry of Agriculture wants to

immediately eliminate 10 wolves. Negotiations are engaged. The final decision is four. Regrettably neither the associations nor the Ministry of Ecology have power to influence a change to zero killing.

- 2004:** Early August the government authorises officially the killing of four wolves before December 2004. The ONCFS (who also conducts field research on wolves) are entrusted with the responsibility to manage the killing of the four wolves. The Minister of Agriculture promises a medal to the first agent who kills a wolf ! Numerous associations react with competent lawyers accusing the government for illegal conduct. The authorisations are momentarily withheld after a judge's examination, but then released again.

**October 21, 2004:** A she-wolf is of about 18 months old is killed by the agents of ONCFS in the commune of Bouvante (Drôme).

**October 27, 2004:** A male wolf of about 2 years old is killed by the agents of ONCFS, in Taillefer (Isère). The wolf is said to be the Alpha of a pack of 3 wolves.

**Today:** A number of associations have filed lawsuit against the government for poaching, non-respect of international engagements, etc. However, the agents of ONCFS are still out there trying to kill another two wolves.....

Lise Donnez, Wolf Coordinator, FERUS, ldonnez@yahoo.com, tel : + 33 450 94 29 06. NB : I will be at « Carnivores 2004 » in Santa Fe. November 7, 2004.

# Large Carnivore Initiative in Europe

The Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe (LCIE) is a network of European organisations and experts from 25 countries working to secure viable populations of large carnivores in coexistence with people.

The LCIE website has a wealth of information and is well worth a visit for anyone interested in large carnivores.

The site can be found at: [www.lcie.org](http://www.lcie.org)



## PREFACE

In Issue 16, Summer 2003, Wolf Print published an article by Sue M. Sefscik regarding the Iranian Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*). The following article is an update on the status and continuing research on the grey wolf in Iran.

# Food Preference of the Grey Wolf in Karkas Hunting Prohibited Area, Iran

Kaveh Hatami<sup>1</sup> & Mohammad S. Farhadinia<sup>2</sup>  
Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS)

## ABSTRACT

For many people, wolves are the symbol of human killers and thus, should be removed in any way. Many Iranian people still believe that wolves attack whatever they find, e.g., humans, livestock, children, elders and weaker animals such as gazelles even though they can hunt other wildlife species. This article shows whenever wolves have enough food sources, they prefer to avoid human communities. With a decline in suitable food sources, distances between wolves and human will be reduced. What became clear to us through our research was that the wolves never attack people as food if other sources are available. These sources can be everything from their original wild species, to domestic hen houses and even municipal wastes. The food sources are the main reason to decrease or increase buffer zone layers between wolves and humans. It must be mentioned that non-permitted hunters are still a major problem for all wildlife species.

During past decade, there is only one case of a human casualty caused by a wolf attack.

## INTRODUCTION

For many years, wolves have been known as a species which attacks people and human communities. They are perceived as monsters. Accordingly, the wolves are hunted and killed in a variety of ways: poisoning, trapping, shooting, destroying their burrows, etc.

In Iran, there is opposition to the wolves; and people believe that by eliminating them, the world will be a better place. Because sheep, goats and other domestic livestock are present in wolf territory, there are many reports about wolves being hunted every year. The main reason to kill wolves is that they will attack livestock, people and herdsmen.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study site was Karkas Hunting Prohibited Area, located 400 km south of Tehran in Isfahan Province, near the city of Natanz. This area has been known as a prohibited area since 1992. Karkas Prohibited Area has had two lethal air crashes, causing more than 200 casualties.

This area involves 85000 hec. It is a good symbol of an ecotone area because there is an overlap of two or more different ecosystems.

There are two different climatic conditions at the same time, being mountains which lie between the other area which is a central desert. These mountains are the Zagros Mountain Range that begin from Azarbaijan Province in the northwest of Iran and reach to Sistan and Baluchestan in the southwest. They range over 2500 km. There are many high peaks here, and the most important of them is Karkas at 3000 meters.

There is usually snow on the peaks that contain many fresh water bodies. They are cold and fresh even during the hot summers. The difference of temperature between any two places within the Karkas Prohibited Area can be as much as 20 centigrade. There are also hard wind gusts in the area, with speeds reaching as high as 100 kilometers per hour.

The area is separated in two parts: North and South. There are differences between the two parts, in green cover, fresh water bodies and soil productivity. There are 20 villages surrounding Karkas, with 11 in the north and nine in the south, although some of the villages in the southern part have far fewer people than the northern villages. There is much more rain in the north than in the south so people of the south sometimes migrate to the north or to cities like Kashan, Ardestan, and Isfahan.

People of both areas are herdsmen with less dependence on agriculture than would be expected. The herds are sheep and goats with a herd numbering upwards to 300 or more. Livestock for them is everything. Herdsmen meet their needs by selling and buying livestock products like milk, cheese, and butter. They then buy their unmet needs like hygienic materials, soap, and clothes.

We conducted 25 interviews with herdsman villagers. They told us that they are

concerned about wolves. The herdsmen reported that wolves attack their sheep and make mass killings. In one reported case, a wolf attacked and killed 23 sheep while he ate only a lamb.

The herdsmen have rifles. Some of the tourists who come to this region also have guns and are illegal hunters. They come from Kashan, Tehran, Isfahan and Ardestan cities. Finally, the non-permitted hunters who come from neighboring villages should be added to this list.

The main game species of the area are Ibex and wild sheep.

Due to the legal and illegal hunting by humans, the number of these species has been decreased. In our interviews, the hunters believe that the wolf population should be removed because the wolves are dangerous for all and kill game that the hunters could also shoot.

People believe that wolves can't co-exist with human communities because they eat humans. But what is the actual fact? Is it true that wolves are ready to attack humans? Have they only one choice? Or is there something about them that we don't know yet?

During our interviews we asked herdsmen: Have you ever seen wolves kill your livestock? Their answer was positive.

Have you ever lost any sheep or goats?

Yes, they replied.

They mentioned that they only HEARD that the wolves have attacked some people, and they have never seen anybody who had been attacked by wolves.

Then we asked herdsmen when did you last see wolves? Their replies varied from four months ago to over one year. Some of them told us that they could see wolves every night.







Wolf den.

We researched wolf attack reports and saw that the last attack was a decade ago. Previous to that, a serious attack had happened, but it happened in city of Ardestan, 40 km east of Karkas. After shooting the wolf, it was confirmed to be an illness.

We wondered why the herdsman told us such things?

We concluded it was fear of wolves and the fairy tales about them, the same problem that wolves face all over the world.

So what would wolves eat if they don't attack herdsman?

According to biological documents, the wolves eat municipal trash-waste such as bread, food, meat, and bone. They may also attack hen farms that may attract other carnivores.

The number of hen farms in the area is more than 20, and we thought it might be possible to see tracks of other carnivores. There were many prints of carnivore species around the hen houses, such as fox, jackal, hyena and wolf. The hen farmers told us that they take away the hen wastes to an area 2 or 3 km. away. Other times, most of the waste has been eliminated by carnivores. When the waste is taken away, a man familiar to the wolves does it, and they never attack him.

During our discussion with one of them, he told us when he first started taking away the waste, the carnivores used to avoid him and tried to hide themselves. But now, they know him and when he discharges the waste, they begin their work and jump up and start to eat it even when he carries the garbage with his motorcycle. They jump on and tear up plastics and eat the loads in a friendly manner.

When the wastes, mostly consisting of dead hens, bones, and feathers, are discharged, jackals first come to have a party. Then he would see foxes and lastly the wolves. When wolves come, the others would leave the location as fast as they can.

When these wastes are left on the ground, more carnivores are attracted to it.

Natanz is the closest town to the Karkas. The Natanz municipal wastes are full of carbonic materials that can be used by some species, such as foxes.

The number of wolves in this area is remarkable. There are also dog-wolves here. Fox, jackal and hyena prints can be seen here as well.

These carnivores fill an important ecological role by improving environmental

health through elimination of wastes and trash when eaten by them.

In one case, the number of wolves and their reactions to the human presence was very interesting.

We were in this area when a pack of wolves saw us. They looked at us and then left us slowly. Then a pack of 4 wolves were assessing us. We thought their eyes were looking at us in surprise. The distance between us and the wolves was less than 30 meters. We moved as close as 10 meters towards them before they departed.

The situation differs in various areas. In one instance, I was alone and the distance was near 700 meters. This pack consisted of two wolves which were gray in color.

During the interviews, herdsman told us that the maximum number of wolves in each pack is usually three. Most of the wolves seen were individuals, with pack size usually being two. One herder told me that he had seen a 5 wolves group, and they weren't all the same age.

The last conflict between wolves and herders seemed to be more than four months ago. There was a report that claimed wolf had attacked one of the herders the night before our interview. We did it over look, but concluded it was false. It seems that these wolves know them and try to avoid making conflict with humans.

One of wolves' food sources is hunting wild sheep and Ibex. The wolves try to hunt them if they cannot find food wastes. The number of wild sheep and Ibexes is less than 1000. We saw several skulls and bones that led us to understand that wolves are the main predators of Karkas H.P.A.

Local people and authorities were interested in knowing if leopards still roamed this area, but our searches showed that the leopards have left Karkas forever.

### RESULTS:

Generally wolves try to keep a secure distance from human communities, and the size of it depends on the security situation of their habitat. However, if wolves feel secure, this distance will be decreased. If they have plenty and secure food sources, there would be no reason for wolves to encroach upon human communities.

Food resources for wolves can be broken down into four sections:

1. Municipal wastes. This is their first priority. In the Karkas area, there is a special site for waste.
2. Hen farms waste. This is their second option. There is no special site for it, so some animals find it sooner than others.
3. Prey species. The number of available prey species has declined, therefore the chance of wolves to have a successful hunt has also decreased. Most of them do not hunt and their diet has changed, however, some wolves still try to hunt.
4. Livestock. We can add to wolves list, but the number of wolves that attack livestock has decreased. During our search, we found a dead lamb that supposedly had

been killed by wolves. But there was no evidence to prove it. This option is dangerous for wolves because most of herders are armed or they have special poison for wolves.

5. Man-eating or human as food. This is the last choice wolves, if it occurs at all. These wolves should be removed, because most of them have a disease, which opens up the possibility for them to infect other species and even humans.

But in the Karkas hunting prohibited area, it has been over 10 years that the wolves have attacked anybody, and they have shown that most things that people think about them only come from human fiction and story telling, not nature and the facts.



### CONCLUSION

The wolves' food aptitude is hunting, and they prefer to have a separated area from human communities. But if a wolf ventures passed their borders, the reaction against him is predictable, and the wolf is the loser. They can't win against weapons and poisons that herders use to kill wolves. An increase in facilities there has lead to an increase in roads. These roads are ones that illegal hunters can use too. As a result, the number of suitable wolf-game has decreased. People could remember large packs of gazelles, wild goats, and sheep. There were also leopards. But today, the leopards and gazelles have left Karkas and others are close to destruction.

This means the Karkas wolves have to change their diets. By decreasing the game population, the wolf population has decreased too. Human damage of their natural habitat means that the number of wolves and other predators has also gone down. It seems to us that the wolves in Karkas are joining the leopards towards disappearance.

### Reference:

- Farhadinia, M. Hatami, K. (2003) Identification of carnivore species of Karkas hunting prohibited area and their conflict with the humans.
- Isfahan provincial DOE. In press.
- Ziaee, hooshang. (1996) Field guide of mammals of Iran DOE.
- Reports on wolves from 1990 to 2001, DOE.
- Reports on infectious diseases among Canidae (2000) DOE. Unpublished.





# Controversial origins: a story of wolves, conspiracy, black helicopters and things that go bump in the night

by John D C Linnell

**Nobody doubts that Scandinavian wolves are back, but the questions are where did they come from and how did they make the journey? A web of conspiracy theories have been woven by anti-wolf groups, invoking helicopters, late night border crossings and clandestine releases perpetuated by extremist wolf-lovers. However, modern science has shown exactly what wolves are capable of doing when left to their own devices.**

Scandinavian wolves were functionally extinct as far as being a reproducing population was concerned when they were protected in 1966 in Sweden and 1971 in Norway. Apart from an isolated reproduction in northern Sweden in 1978 (these wolves were rapidly killed, both legally and illegally) no reproductive activity was seen until 1983 when it was confirmed that pups had been born in southern Sweden. Since then, the population has grown to its present level of about 100 wolves spanning the border of southern Norway and Sweden.

As readers are no doubt aware, the very presence of these wolves is highly controversial with respect to depredation on livestock, the killing of hunting dogs and competition with hunters for game. However, one of the biggest conflicts has been about where these wolves have come from, and how they managed to make it all the way to southern Scandinavia. This debate has produced an amazing tangle of conspiracy theories, with leading anti-wolf advocates claiming that the wolves had been released by the government, by scientists, by the WWF, by zoos, in fact by just about anybody. Witnesses have been bought forward claiming to have seen cars with loaded with caged wolves crossing over the border from Sweden to

Norway at night, that they have seen helicopters overhead, that they have seen wolves jumping out of the backs of vans parked along forest roads and even highways, that they have tracked down cases of people importing wolves illegally from Estonia, and so on. The human imagination, when left to its own devices, knows no limits! Books have been written and published, and TV documentaries filmed proclaiming variations of this conspiracy theory without one iota of provable fact. One Swede claims he has definitive proof hidden in his safe, but will not allow it to be released until after his death. Local newspapers are full of letters to the editor stating it as a fact that the wolves are released. The anti-wolf argument goes that if the wolves have not come naturally then there is no need to conserve them, so they can all be removed. Can there be any truth to all this? Do we need to invoke conspiracy to explain biology? What does the science say?

The theory about their origins that has been most widely accepted by researchers from the start is that the wolves had come naturally from Russia or Finland, with the possible addition of some few survivors of the original Scandinavian population. Tissue and blood samples have been stored from many of the wolves that have been captured for research or found dead during the last 20 years. In addition, samples have been taken from zoo animals that represent the original Scandinavian population, and from bones stored in museum collections. Geneticists have been able to extract DNA from all these animals and reconstruct what has actually happened. The data clearly shows that the wolves presently roaming southern Scandinavia are of Finnish – Russian origins. They can detect no remains of the original Scandinavian genes which rules out both the

role of survivors from the original population and the clandestine release of captive wolves of Scandinavian origin. Apart from one distinct episode where a female wolf successfully mated with a dog they can also exclude the idea that all the wolves are escaped pet hybrids. It is also interesting that even in the century old museum samples they can detect a handful of individuals that also appear to have been of Finnish – Russian origin – long before anybody dreamed up reintroduction ideas. This genetics work clearly identifies their origin – but the question remains did the wolves make it on their own?

The border area between Finland and Russia was the closest potential source for natural colonization at that time as Finland had also almost managed to eradicate wolves during the mid 20th century. However, the distance from the Finno-Russian border to the site of the 1983 reproduction is approximately 1000 to 1200 km! Can a wolf really travel that far? During the last 30 years in North America many, many hundred wolves have been radio-collared in Alaska, Canada, Minnesota etc. We were able to find published data on the distance traveled by 298 juvenile wolves that had been tracked or recovered dead after having dispersed from the pack where they were born. The distances were truly staggering! The record was 890 km as the crow flies (about the distance from London to Inverness) and at least 21 individuals had dispersed over 300 km. These distances must also be regarded as minimums because many wolf studies have had individuals that simply vanish beyond the distance they can be detected. Furthermore, when all the twists and turns were taken into account one individual had moved 4200 km in only 180 days. Unmarked wolves have also been found (usually shot or killed in collisions

with cars) many hundred kilometers (up to 700) from the nearest source population. All this data testifies to their enormous dispersal potential. Although the distance between the Finno-Russian border and south Scandinavia is slightly further than the longest published dispersal distance, it is clearly within the capability of a wolf to walk the distance. Besides the distance is potentially shorter in winter if wolves crossed the ice on the frozen Baltic sea. Throughout the arctic, wolves have demonstrated the ability to traverse stretches of sea ice of up to 70 km – much further than the longest necessary leg of an island-hopping Baltic crossing. Finally, the data that Finnish and Scandinavian wolf researchers are starting to collect shows that their wolves really do move between the different countries.

These data indicates that wolves could have made the journey from the nearest source population on their own, so there is no need to invoke clandestine releases. However, on the other hand it is impossible to rule them out. Reintroduction has been used quite commonly in Europe to reestablish or reinforce lynx and bear populations. The only wolf reintroduction that is known from Europe was in the then Soviet republic of

Georgia in the 1980's, although wolves have been recently reintroduced with great success in parts of the United States. Among the European lynx reintroductions it is well known that a number of unplanned clandestine releases occurred in Switzerland and Germany, so such things do actually happen. There are also well known cases where captive wolves have escaped, for examples from the Bavarian National Parks enclosures in the 1970's. Interestingly, the clandestine release of wolves has become a widespread myth throughout parts of Europe where there populations have started to recover. You encounter the same tales of black helicopters and researchers driving around with trucks full of wolves in Norway, Sweden, Croatia, Spain, France and Italy. While none of this can be disproved, the point is that where wolves are concerned their natural dispersal ability is so great you just do not need to invoke these clandestine explanations to explain their reappearance.

So why do people go to such great lengths to construct conspiracy theories? Social scientists working with the topic speculate that it is because anti-wolf advocates often claim to have a deep love for nature – at least

for a pastoral or Arcadian form of nature where wolves and other predators are absent. They instinctively hate the wolf on its return because of both tradition and real conflicts. However, this creates an internal conflict – how can they love nature but hate the wolf? The answer is that by making the presence of the wolf artificial and unnatural (the result of an illegal human release) they conceptually remove it from nature and can therefore continue loving "nature" and hating wolves.

This debate about natural or assisted colonization is going to become increasingly important as wolves continue to appear in unexpected places – for example western Finland, eastern Germany, the French Pyrenees, or the Madrid province in Spain – often some distance away from the main population concentrations where people are more accustomed to their presence. In many ways this showcases the ability of wolves to adapt as they reoccupy their old haunts despite what we have done to the habitat in the century that they have been gone. At the same time, the sometimes bizarre nature of resultant conflicts reminds us of how intractable old prejudices and attitudes can be.



Photo: Andrew Lilley





# UK Wolf Conservation Trust Autumn Seminar October 2004

The speakers at the Autumn Seminar were John Denness and Jorgelina Marino. Both gave entertaining talks which were appreciated by everyone who attended.

The seminar was held at the local school and Village Hall in Beenham, with delegates spending time with the Trust's wolves at the Centre.

John Denness gave the first talk which included a potted history of the Trust, and a life history of the Trust's three European wolves whose parents were imported from Eastern Europe, and whose lineage is not too far removed from their wild cousins.

The audience was treated to numerous slides which have never been made public until now, including pictures of Roger and Colin who made the trip to Europe to bring back the Trust's three original European wolves.

John is one of the longest serving volunteers at the Trust, and has probably spent the longest amount of time with the wolves. He is responsible for Wolf Welfare at the Trust and also has the "chore" of seeing the wolves settled in their shelters each night. John has formed a very close bond with all of the Trust's wolves, and this was very apparent in some of the slides shown. He has the very great privilege of being seen as a "pack member" by the wolves.



Photo: Dominic Earl

Jorgelina Marino and Claudio Sillero with their daughter Pampa and John Denness



Photo: Martin Harvey

The second speaker, Jorgelina Marino, has been working with the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Project for some time. She is married to Claudio Sillero who was part of the original team responsible for this project.

The article in this issue is based on Jorgelina's talk at the seminar. You can read through this at your leisure to gain an understanding of the issues surrounding one of the most endangered wolves in the world.

Like previous seminars, this one was a great

success and enjoyed and appreciated by everyone who attended, and by the volunteers who help out on the day. Credit for organising the seminar goes to Toni Shelbourne who now works with military precision to make sure the day runs smoothly, but enjoyable. The support of all the volunteers also makes each seminar successful. These are dedicated people who give up a lot of their spare time for the benefit of wild wolf conservation.

**THE 2005 UKWCT CALENDAR**

**NOW ON SALE**

**Contact the Trust Centre on : 0118 971 3330  
Or visit the website at: [www.ukwolf.org](http://www.ukwolf.org)**

# Highland gods: Ethiopian wolves' perilous existence in Afroalpine enclaves

by Jorgelina Marino

Ethiopian wolves are arguably the rarest canids in the world. Yet, until recently the world knew very little about them. The highland peoples of Ethiopia always coexisted with these handsome, jackal-looking animals they call *jedala farda* or *ky kebero*, but field biologists only started to thoroughly study them in the late 1980s. Pioneer work by Oxford University's Claudio Sillero and Dada Gottelli in the Bale Mountains of Southern Ethiopia unveiled the intricate details of their ecology and complex sociality. Surprisingly for a carnivore of its size (12-20kg) the Ethiopian wolf depends almost exclusively on the small rodents that thrive in the Afroalpine grasslands and meadows. While wolves forage solitarily, they live in packs and show high levels of cooperation, helping to raise the pups of the dominant pair and defend a communal territory.

The studies in Bale illustrated ingenious adaptations of a carnivore specialized to exploit a rich but geographically restricted prey. As a consequence, Ethiopian wolves are virtually trapped in their island kingdoms, where they compete for a limited number of breeding territories. The perilous existence of such a marvellous animal prompted Claudio to establish the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP) in 1995, amidst a climate of political unrest and the threat of disease jeopardizing the persistence of these very special creatures. Today the EWCP is the most successful conservation programme in the country, focusing on the wolves but also pledging for the protection of high altitude ecosystems, which mean so much for the livelihoods of mountain people and the survival of a unique array of endemic animal and plant species.

I had the opportunity to join the EWCP team in 1997 as the resident ecologist and visited the most remote mountains in Ethiopia in search of the remaining wolf populations. The political climate had changed and the possibility arose to fully assess the status and distribution of wolves nationwide. The Born Free Foundation, the National Geographic and UKWCT supported a series of very exciting expeditions to explore distant mountains in five different regions in Ethiopia.

Our current understanding of the wolves' biogeography suggests that they evolved from

Eurasian wolf-like ancestors that colonized the highlands of Ethiopia as recently as 100,000 years ago. The warming of the climate during the last deglaciation brought about a severe reduction of the Afroalpine habitats to which wolves so successfully adapted. With the recent upward expansion of people, Afroalpine habitats became virtual islands in mountaintops, immersed on sea of agriculture fields. At the time of our expeditions, wolf populations were better known in Bale and Central Shoa range, and to a lesser degree in the Simien Mountains in the north -where the Ethiopian wolf was first described. Elsewhere, information was limited to a few sporadic records. We were nicely surprised by finding small wolf populations still surviving in almost every sizeable patch of Afroalpine range visited. Our surveys confirmed the existence of seven isolated populations. The smallest lived in a tiny range of a mere 50km<sup>2</sup>, and consisted of as few as 15 wolves. At the other end of the spectrum Bale is still undoubtedly the largest and most important population with some 250 animals. We also confirmed the local extinction of wolves in Mount Choke some 100 years ago, and the recent disappearance of wolves in two areas that simply became too small to sustain a viable population.

While the global estimate of 500 wolves did not differ much from previous approximations, more discrete populations meant better chances for the long-term persistence of the species! The small size of most extant populations accredits that the species has certain resilience, and is probably adapted, to the effects of habitat loss and isolation. But small populations, especially if isolated, are particularly vulnerable to environmental and biological factors leading populations into the vortex of extinction. Our surveys indicate that habitat loss is the single most threatening factor, although events of rabies outbreaks such as those in Bale can have catastrophic effects upon small populations. In the heavily populated Northern Highlands subsistence agriculture has pushed the altitudinal limit of natural vegetation at altitudes as high as 3,900m – and more commonly at 3,700m. While the highest peaks still support vast Afroalpine areas, wolves in lower-lying ranges, with more arable land, risk extinction in the face of further

habitat loss. The recent disappearance of wolves in habitat patches reduced to 20km<sup>2</sup> is a shocking example. On the other hand, persecution is a threat that appears to have diminished with time since the end of the period of political upheaval. Where wolves are killed, the conflict due to livestock predation was more profound. Our study of wolf diet unearthed very few livestock remains, but we envisage that under current trends of human population growth conflicts will go on the rise. More livestock will probably lead to more predation by wolves, overgrazing to prey depletion, and the construction of new roads to drastic loss of suitable habitats.

Information gathered during the expeditions led the EWCP to allocate new resources towards the monitoring and protection of the small northern populations. Presently the EWCP is active in all five populations north of the Rift valley. Regular visits by EWCP teams to these remote areas can have the immediate effect of raising awareness of the plight of this animal of which Ethiopians are very proud. The programme also monitors packs and populations and work with schools, communities and the local government. This is a highly valuable effort, because although the existence of various relict populations is a good omen, these populations are surviving on an edge. The more I learnt about the reality of both people and wolves in the highlands of Ethiopia, the more profound was my perception of the immensity of the task ahead. Fortunately, a group of enthusiastic people and organizations continue working to give these mountain gods a helping hand, protecting natural resources that are vital for all the inhabitants of these mountains.

Photo: A.L. Harrington





# Ethiopia's Bale Mountains National Park

by Deborah Randall and Alastair Nelson

Ethiopia doesn't typically conjure images of wildlife spectacles, but with 70% of the land over 3000 m in Africa and 73% of all Afroalpine vegetation, the country is rich in biodiversity and high in endemism. Nestled within the country's mountainous expanse, the Bale Mountains National Park (BMNP) in south-eastern Ethiopia protects the largest piece of Afroalpine habitat on the continent and features the second largest stand of forest in Ethiopia. For those outdoor enthusiasts interested in mountain destinations, the high altitude Afroalpine plateau rises to over 4,000 m and includes the second highest peak in Ethiopia – Tullu Deemtu (4,377 m). The southern slopes of this massif are covered by the lush and largely unexplored Hareenna Forest (1,500 - 2,200 m) – a moist tropical forest where unknown species abound. With so varied a landscape, the BMNP is certainly not without a wide diversity of secrets and splendors.

The highlands of Ethiopia are a biodiversity hotspot harbouring an assemblage of species that evolved in complete isolation and are therefore found nowhere else in the world. This makes the Ethiopian highlands a place of incredibly high endemism. The Bale Mountains are no exception to this. Here you will find many species of mammals, birds, amphibians, and plants found only in Ethiopia and in some cases only in Bale. With such a high diversity of wildlife and endemism, the BMNP is a crucial protected area for a significant portion of Ethiopia's and the world's biodiversity. The rivers, streams, and swamps in the Bale massif also comprise a vitally important watershed

serving the lowlands of south-eastern Ethiopia, Somalia and northern Kenya. These areas combined support approximately 1 million people and comprise a large part of the unique semi-arid and arid Horn of Africa ecosystems.

The park was originally established in 1969 to protect the endangered mountain nyala. With fewer than 3,000 mountain nyala remaining in the world, the BMNP sustains the largest and only protected population of this endangered antelope. Mountain nyala flourish in the high-altitude woodland and shrub dominated valley that makes up the northern end of park and the area around the park headquarters. Female mountain nyala live in groups with their calves and are often accompanied by one or two adult males looking for breeding opportunities. Males establish dominance hierarchies by challenging each other in ritualized, strutting displays that, in severe cases, include prolonged clashes of horns with each animal vying for the next opportunity to join a group of breeding females.

With males weighing up to 280 kg and standing about 1.5 m at the shoulder, this strikingly large and graceful species is a stunning encounter. Visitors need only take an evening walk around the juniper and Hagenia forest surrounding the park lodge to get a glimpse of this Ethiopian endemic at close range. The animals are shy but plentiful in this small enclave outside the main boundary of the park. Trips to the Gaysay Valley at the northern extreme of the park will also reveal numerous groups of mountain nyala along

with warthogs, Bohor reedbuck, grey duiker, and Menelik's bushbuck – another Ethiopian endemic subspecies. Rarer wildlife appearances in the Gaysay Valley will be made by serval cats, common jackals, Ethiopian wolves, and -later in the day - spotted hyaenas.

The Bale Mountains also host the largest population of the rare and endangered Ethiopian wolf. With approximately 500 animals remaining throughout the country, the Ethiopian wolf is arguably the rarest and most imperiled wild canid in Africa, if not the world. The species exists in only seven small, isolated mountain ranges in Ethiopia. An estimated 300-350 Ethiopian wolves inhabit the vast expanse of Afroalpine habitat above 3000 m in the Bale Mountains. The Afroalpine is also dominated by a staggeringly high density of rodents – the primary food item for the Ethiopian wolf. A total of 16 species of rodents are found in the BMNP. Eight of these are endemic to Ethiopia, including the giant mole rat which is endemic to Bale. This enigmatic 1 kg rodent, which does not stray far from its burrow entrance, is the preferred food item of Ethiopian wolves in the Bale Mountains.

The abundant rodent fauna of the Bale Mountains is also primarily responsible for sustaining the incredibly high density of raptors. Golden eagles, Augur buzzards, Imperial eagles, black eagles, tawny eagles, steppe eagles, lanner falcons, kestrels, and Lammergeier vultures are all found here. The Bale Mountains are also one of Ethiopia's most important bird areas with seasonal concentrations of waterbirds in addition to the diverse raptor assemblage. Among Bale's 16 endemic bird species, sightings of wattled ibis, blue-winged geese, thick-billed raven, and spot-breasted plover are exceptionally common.

The largely unexplored Hareenna forest harbours a completely different variety of flora and fauna to that found on the Afroalpine plateau. Multi-disciplinary research expeditions are needed to learn more about the fascinating ecosystems within the moist-tropical, bamboo and cloud forests and the species they sustain. Among those species already known to dwell here, black and white colobus monkeys, baboons, bushbuck, warthog, giant forest hog, and bushpig are common. Nocturnal animals include genets, civets, bush babies and hyenas. Lucky visitors might also get a glimpse of lion, leopards, or wild dogs.



### **Trekking in the Bale Mountains National Park**

The Bale Mountains offer outdoor and wildlife enthusiasts a uniquely different African experience. Trekking is the most popular activity for tourists visiting the area and the best way to enjoy the variety of spectacular landscapes and wildlife harboured within the park. Trekking routes ascend along the many lava outpourings that have given shape to the deep valley walls and rocky peaks characterising the Bale Mountains. Intrepid travellers will also bear the cold winds to relish the open expanse of Afroalpine habitat on the Sanetti Plateau, including the many glacial lakes, spectacular canyons, and the summit of Ethiopia's second highest peak. Waterfalls, caves, and incredible vistas are further attractions of the park that can be discovered on foot or on horseback. Wildlife is abundant and easily seen in the open landscape. A group of wolves patrolling in the distance or a lone wolf stalking a giant mole rat hole are frequent sights for visitors to the Web Valley or Sanetti Plateau. Bird enthusiasts are equally rewarded with spectacles of Augur buzzards and tawny eagles soaring in the thermal currents overhead.

### **Conservation of the Bale Mountains National Park**

The social, economic, and biological significance of the Bale Mountains, coupled with its intrinsic natural beauty, provide compelling justification for the local, national and international importance of this ecosystem. It is thus fortunate to know that a large part of this system is protected within the 2200 km<sup>2</sup> Bale Mountains National Park. However, as might be expected in one of the poorest countries in the world with a burgeoning population, the park and the ecosystem that it was established to protect are under threat. With approximately 8,000 households in and around the BMNP, there is a significant demand for space and limited resources. Most notably, agricultural expansion on the high-altitude plains surrounding the mountains and increased livestock grazing put the long-term security of the park at risk. Since it was established, permanent settlements within the park boundaries have grown exponentially and the seasonal movement of people and their livestock into the park continues to increase.

Loss of habitat due to the expansion of human and domestic livestock populations is indeed the most serious threat to the ecosystem and wildlife. Transmission of infectious diseases from domestic dogs to Ethiopian wolves is a serious and immediate threat to the persistence of the species in Bale as well as other parts of Ethiopia. Indiscriminate poisoning of hyenas to prevent livestock predation has led to the illegal killing of wolves within the park. In the Hareenna forest, extraction of fuelwood and non-timber forest products, in addition to wildlife poaching, are occurring at unsustainable rates. As in the rest of the park, the dearth of information about the forest ecosystem or present levels of resource use currently impedes effective conservation action.

The overall challenges facing the park are not trivial. Limited human and financial resources and lack of sufficient support for protected area management in Ethiopia currently hamper the safeguarding of this vital ecosystem and its wildlife. Furthermore, many of the households are poor and already dependent on the park and its resources for their livelihoods. Practical solutions to the conservation needs of the park require a good understanding of the natural ecosystem and the level of resource use that it can sustain. Mechanisms for collaborative decision-making and natural resource protection between the park and communities must also be developed.

### **The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme**

The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP) is at the forefront of conservation activities in the Bale Mountains (and other wolf areas in Ethiopia). In response to the Ethiopian wolf's risk of imminent extinction, the EWCP was established in 1995 to identify and counteract the threats to the survival of the species. Among the major activities the EWCP undertakes are continuous wolf monitoring to verify the status of the population, education within communities to increase local environmental awareness, and vaccination of domestic dogs in the area to reduce the persistent threat of disease transmission to the wolf population. The programme has also acted as a catalyst for other conservation initiatives by facilitating the involvement of other organisation in the Bale Mountains.

The importance of conservation action to protect this species became apparent in late 2003 with the outbreak of rabies in a critical subpopulation of wolves in the BMNP. The rabies outbreak killed 78% of 95 wolves occupying the Web Valley - formerly Ethiopia's highest density wolf area. In response to the outbreak, the EWCP trapped and vaccinated 69 Ethiopian wolves in areas outside of the Web Valley to prevent the ongoing spread of the disease. As a result of the EWCP's active wolf monitoring team and the success of the wolf vaccination campaign, we can confirm that the rabies outbreak did not spread to other

areas. The population in the Web Valley has also stabilized after the sudden crash in numbers and will hopefully start to recover with the upcoming breeding season. EWCP's ongoing work in the Bale Mountains is critically important to ensure the long-term survival of this highly endangered canid.

### **Frankfurt Zoological Society**

In recognition of the importance of the Bale Mountains as a biodiversity hotspot and vital watershed, Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) became involved in the BMNP in 2004. The main aim of the FZS-Bale Mountains Conservation Project is to support the development of a properly managed and better secured Bale Mountains National Park while ensuring the long-term protection and sustainable use of its resources. The main activities include working intimately with staff of the BMNP and local authorities to strengthen park operations and staff capacity, facilitating the development of tourism as an income generating activity within the area, and increasing the flow of benefits from the park to local communities. The first two years of the project focus on developing park infrastructure, helping to provide the necessary equipment to re-establish scout patrolling, facilitating dialogue with the communities, initiating research and monitoring, investigating the legal framework of the park, and facilitating eco-tourism activities. With its proven record of effective park support in Africa, FZS's commitment is a timely and vital part of the consortium of efforts aimed at the long-term protection of the BMNP.

In addition to working with park staff and management, both EWCP and FZS also cooperate in close partnership with other NGOs and local authorities working for the benefit of the park and towards the conservation of its natural resources. There is thus promise that the growing number of conservation initiatives in the Bale Mountains National Park will give birth to the partnerships and develop the mechanisms that are needed to ensure a lasting future for the park and its vast number of dependents – local communities and wildlife alike.







# A Year of Change for the Druids in Yellowstone

Kirsty Peake

I stood at the road side on our last morning on a cold February morning watching the Druid Pack through the spotting scope. This had become a ritual at the end of each of our visits – I was saying goodbye to the Alpha pair of 42F and 21M and to 21M's son 253M. My thoughts went across the Lamar Valley to them – "stay safe, stay healthy and see you next time".

42F and 21M in 2003 were in their eighth year and alphas of what is probably the most photographed wolf pack – The Druid Pack. Contrary to all the expectations of the Wolf Project at the beginning – people can come to Yellowstone and see wolves, especially the Druids who set up 'home' in the Lamar Valley. Will this always be the case though?

Since the reintroduction of the wolves to Yellowstone in 1995 the population has grown quickly, with the amazing Druids reaching 32 wolves at one time – apparently the biggest wolf pack ever recorded. In the summer months Yellowstone now not only suffered from 'bear jams' on the roads but also 'wolf jams'. Over 264 wolves are currently alive. A few non-collared wolves, not associated with packs do roam the area. There are about 40 packs and groups. To qualify as a breeding pack a female and male must raise young to December 31. Wolf groups are newly formed associations that are not considered packs because they have not produced offspring.

In January 2004 we heard the sad news that 42F had been killed in a territorial dispute

with another pack. In our February 2004 visit we learnt that there was still 'life in the old wolf yet' as 21M had teamed up with 286F. It was great to see the old man still running things in the Druid territory. Not only did he have a new young mate but they also produced a litter of pups.

In June 2004 21M's collar stopped sending a signal. Wolf watchers started to concentrate on finding 21M. After a time it was assumed that he had died. A great sadness was felt by everyone involved with the wolves in Yellowstone. Many hoped that, like his mother before him, that 21M's body would never be found. An employee of Xanterra, who run the lodging facilities in the Park, was hiking out in the back country and came across the body of a wolf – it was identified as 21M. He had been killed during a hunt. He had probably been kicked by an elk and age had caught up with him and his speed and agility were not what they were. The Wolf Project team had really hoped that these two would make it to 2005 for the tenth anniversary.

With the death of these two Alphas in their ninth year the Druids were left leaderless. 21M's son 253M became the natural heir but would he be able to hold on to this? 253M was one of a number of young wolves attacked a few years ago by the Mollie Pack at the Druid rendezvous. By the time the rest of the pack had returned in response to the calls from the juvenile wolves 253M had a damaged left back leg. He is easy to pick out in the pack

as he trails this back leg and rarely puts any weight on it. Despite this he went off for an exploration of the USA and was found in a coyote trap some 200 miles away. He was collected and brought back part of the way to Yellowstone as bad weather prevented him being transported all the way. He was released still a fair distance away from 'home' (the Lamar Valley) with not only a bad left back leg but now with a damaged front paw from the coyote trap. No one thought they would see him again but within a matter of weeks he turned up again in the Lamar Valley and has been there in the number two spot ever since.

I spoke with Jim Halfpenny and George Bumann this September about the future of the Druids. They both felt that there is a possibility that it will split as there is a newcomer on the block – 302M who is a member of a group. So who is going to be the new Alpha male of the Druids 253M or 302M? Will the Druid Pack survive this turmoil? Time will tell. Perhaps after our next visit in February 2005 we will be able to answer the question.

Next year is a very special year as it will be the 10th anniversary of the reintroduction of the wolves to Yellowstone National Park. There is a feeling that the number of wolves in the Park will never be as great as this again. The prey species had no real predator from 1926 to 1995. Their avoidance tactics had not been a priority during that time. In the last 10 years they have had to re learn how to avoid the wolves. Without the number of easy prey the number of wolves may well drop back.

We are looking forward to visiting again in February 2005 as we feel this could be a vital time of change with the wolves of Yellowstone. We still have a few places available in our group for departure in February. If you are interested then please contact us as soon as possible for more information.

Kirsty Peake  
Winter Wolf Discovery  
Park Cottage  
Widcombe in the Moor  
Newton Abbot  
TQ13 7TR

Email: [wwd@kajpeake.ndo.co.uk](mailto:wwd@kajpeake.ndo.co.uk)



# Book Review



## Biology and Conservation of Wild Canids

Edited by David W. Macdonald,  
University of Oxford and Claudio  
Sillero-Zubiri, University of Oxford

Paperback 432 pages (May 2004)  
£39.99

Publisher: Oxford University Press  
ISBN: 0198515561

Hardcover 464 pages (May 2004) £80  
Publisher: Oxford University Press  
ISBN: 0198515553

- The definitive book on the dog family
- A must-have book for anyone studying carnivores, predators, cooperative breeding and social systems.
- Offers a conceptual framework for future research and applied management

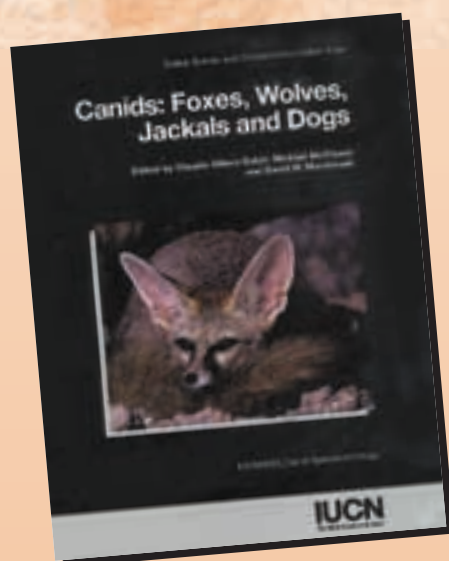
This is the definitive book on the dog family, dealing with many aspects of the biology and conservation of wolves, dogs, jackals and foxes. It covers many topics relevant to modern conservation science, and features detailed case studies of many canid species across the globe. A must-have book for all scientists studying carnivores, predators, cooperative breeding, and social systems. A useful text for both undergraduate and graduate courses in

behavioural ecology and conservation biology. Wild canids are the ancestors of the domestic dog and there are a large number of wolf and domestic dog enthusiasts who will be engaged by the contents of this book.

**This book will appeal to** carnivore conservationists, behavioural ecologists, conservation biologists (from undergrad to postdoctoral level), conservation and wildlife managers. A secondary market exists amongst amateur naturalists, dog owners and dog enthusiasts.

To order a copy visit: <http://www.wildcru.org/aboutus/publications/books.htm>

**Subscribers to the Canid-L list can enjoy a 40% discount. To subscribe to this list visit the website at: [www.canids.org](http://www.canids.org). Add £50 for postage and packing or collect your copy from Oxford University.**



## Canid Action Plan

The new Canid Action Plan synthesises the current knowledge on the biology, ecology and status of all wild canid species, and outlines the conservation actions and projects needed to secure their long-term survival. Aiming at conservation biologists, ecologists, local conservation officials, administrators, educators, and all others dealing with canids in their jobs, the authors aspire to stimulate the conservation of all canids by highlighting problems, debating priorities and suggesting action.

Copies of CAP can be ordered from:  
**Wildlife Conservation Research Unit**  
**Zoology Department, South Parks Rd**  
**Oxford OX1 3PS, United Kingdom**  
[www.wildcru.org](http://www.wildcru.org); [www.canids.org](http://www.canids.org)

or you can download the PDF file at [www.canids.org](http://www.canids.org)

**Yellowstone National Park,  
Wyoming, USA**

**WINTER WOLF DISCOVERY**  
Travelling in a small group enjoy a ten day holiday in February designed specifically to give you an unforgettable experience in the wild country that is Yellowstone:

- Watch wolves in the wild
- Learn about their reintroduction
- Experience a natural ecosystem
- See the thermal features
- Enjoy the majestic scenery
- Watch Yellowstone winter wildlife

Interested?  
Contact Kirby or Alan for more information on  
Email: [wwd@lapeake.net](mailto:wwd@lapeake.net) or [wwd@lapeake.co.uk](mailto:wwd@lapeake.co.uk)  
Tel: 01564 621287 Fax: 01564 621377



