

Wolf Wise List - Abridged

Herewith, a list of facts, research, respected opinions, with a focus on Alberta's wolves. Please note this is a work in progress, there are the fun wolf facts to come... and we look forward to the day when we can add positive news for our wolves.

Compiled by Anna-Marie Ferguson for "Wolf Matters" November, 2013

Counting Wolves

- Counting wolves is difficult if not impossible which makes them vulnerable to rumoured perceptions for exploitation by special interest groups and others. Alberta is said to have between 3500 to 7000 wolves. All government numbers are estimates. Source 2. (Current official wolf count is 7000.)
- At best, population estimates are made every decade but often from statistical models rather than field surveys. Wolf densities here range from 3 to 18 wolves per 1000 km². Densities remain fairly low in Alberta where habitat loss is significant, predator control is high and increasing industrial development prevails. Source 2, year 2011, pg 22-24
- In 1952 Alberta's Wolf population estimated at 5000. In 1962 the estimate was just over 1200. Source 2, and or 8.
- In early 1993 about 70 wolves were killed by the Yukon government in an area adjacent to Kluane Park. It was then was discovered that the wolf population in the area was about 40% less than expected; despite this finding the Yukon government planned to continue the killing. The kill was opposed as biologically unjustified by the Canadian Nature Federation, the World Wildlife Fund in Canada and host of others. The purpose of the kill was to support the caribou herd. Source 3, pages 133-134.
- The Rocky Mountain House wolf population of wolves has long been subjected to hunting and trapping. Source 3, pg162.

Bounties

(also see article by Dwight Rodtka on this website.)

Bounties are legal and unregulated in Alberta. Any one person or group can place a bounty on an animal which can be legally killed. There are **private bounties** within organisations such as the Alberta Trappers Association who began their wolf bounty with the Sundre branch in 2007 funded in part by the Wyoming-based Wild Sheep Foundation. Private bounties were founded and primarily funded by the sheep foundation they are the backbone and "proud of it." Source 14. **Municipal bounties** have been demanded by ranchers and farmers who have lost livestock. They have also been proposed to councillors by special interest groups such as the hunters of the Fish and Game

Association. Proponents of bounties claim they reduce predation on livestock or ungulates... There is no evidence to support this. Source 14.

By way of bounties public money then goes to support the hobbies of hunting and trapping. For example, bounties may range from, \$15 to \$ 500 for adults. The bounty also applies to pups.

Bounties in Alberta are not rooted in science, rather the call for bounties is based on a **perception** of increased wolf population and/or troubles promoted by groups and individuals for whom the bounties are an economical self interest.

- In the Slave River low lands in the Northwest Territories in 1977, \$300 bounty was placed on the wolf's head to allow continued bison hunting. The desire to continue bison hunting justified trapping and aerial shooting of wolves. Within a couple of years the wolf population went from 72 to 2 individuals; and the bison from 2100 to 600. The bounty was revoked in 1979 making a Northwest Territories the last provincial territorial jurisdiction in Canada to abandon the bounty system. Source two page 130
- In Alberta during the 1980's controversial wolf bounty was proposed by hunters and seriously considered by Fish and Wildlife but was rejected as a result of negative public feedback. Source 2, page
- Alberta's current bounties apply to cubs as well as adults. Source eight.
- August 2012, Fort McLeod Fish and Game proposed a bounty on coyotes and wolves to the municipal district of Willow Creek. However, it was pointed out that "a bounty program opens the door to crooked things." For example, "people from anywhere could shoot a wolf or coyote and turn in the body for bounty." The board then agreed **not** to have a bounty program. Source: Fort MacLeod Gazette posted August 14, 2012.
- In 1926 the Great Plains Wolf became extinct under private Alberta bounty. The last female was roped and dragged across the prairie until dead, and then her carcass was dragged from town to town. Source 18, page 189.
- In 1899 the provincial government would not launch a bounty program as that public disapproved of such heavy-handed bloody programs. Source two, page 127.
- Since 2007 there has been a resurgence of the use of bounties in Alberta. One reason for the bounties has been to reduce predation on livestock. There is also a prevailing perception by various interest groups, that wolf numbers are increasingly reducing the opportunities for recreational hunting. There are two separate incentive payments currently in place, the first is the use of public funds (municipal and county jurisdictions) to kill wolves; the second involves private funding, from the Alberta Fish and Game Association and from local Trapper's Associations, and sometimes from a foreign source. And Payouts vary from \$15 to \$500 per wolf; in some cases coyotes are also included in these programs. Source 19, pg.2-3

Livestock Predation

There are individual ranchers and organisations which have proved successful in managing wolf predation with nonlethal methods. Some of whom are to be found on this website. Despite the way the rancher/farmer may be presented by the media, or portrayed by special interest groups claiming to represent the community - there are increasingly many farmers and ranchers who appreciate the wolf, and loath to see it suffer in their name.

- In the wolf friendly “Wood River Wolf Project” there were only four losses out of 27,300 sheep (all four losses the result of one incident.)
- Studies show that fewer than 5% of all livestock losses on the open western rangelands are due to predators, yet stockmen seem to worry about wolves and cougars more than all other threats to their sheep and cattle combined. America - Source 17, page 194.
- Cattle losses due to shipping (i.e. dead on arrival at abattoir) are 12 to 15 times higher than losses to wolves. Source: Department of Zoology University of Guelph 1994. Source 8, page 2.
- Predation of livestock is a problem throughout Alberta but (according to Moorhouse 2010) a particular portion of southern Alberta, which is only 3% of the land mass, accounts for 37% of all paid claims. Source 2, page 172.
- Though high predation numbers are sometimes quoted, it is important to distinguish **confirmed losses to wolves**, as compared to **general predation numbers** which include losses to bears, cougars, etc. A sampling: Alberta livestock predation by wolves, source **Alberta Agriculture**: 1982 = 65, 1983 = 77, 1984 = 68, 1985 = 46, 1986 = 58, 1987 = 37, 1988 = 47, 1989 = 42, 1990 = 46, 1991 = 47, 1992 = 53. Program ceased in 1993 average number of claims 55. Source 3, pg 139. When comparing past numbers, two further factors to keep in mind, are the increasing numbers of livestock in the province, and the deeper their pastures push into wild areas.
- Only 1% of 1,608 wolf scats collected in Manitoba’s Riding Mountain National Park contained remnants of livestock. Source 3, page 137
- ... Grey Wolves seem to have a particular public relations problem... Although livestock losses are very low, wolves are often blamed for livestock attacks and are still widely and irrationally feared (Kellert.*et al.*,1996). Source 15, page 287.

Wolves as Scapegoats

- In 1909, wolves experimentally infected with **sarcoptic mange** were released in Montana as a wolf control measure. It is generally agreed by researchers that mange was introduced to the Canadian prairies through this Draconian route. Source 3, pg 40.
- In one study of Alaskan wolves, it was found that humans had killed 44% of the Nelchina caribou herd from 1971 to 1972, a decrease that had been previously blamed on wolves. Source 3, page.

- Continued from paragraph above – “...one year when caribou strayed too close to the city of Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories, and were slaughtered by its residents by the hundreds, outsiders immediately blamed wolves for the kills.” Source 3, pg 131.
- Over 500 wolves (at the time) killed in the Little Smoky region alone. Scientists say that the wolf kills alone are no solution... habitat protection and restoration is needed to save the caribou. Source Ed Struzik article Edmonton Journal **June 2011** and Source 8, pg1.
- Provincial caribou biologist “... the wolf is being made to pay for what is really the consequence of human activity “. Edmonton Journal November 3, 1986, second source, number 8, pg 2.
- Wolves are not over populating - habitat loss is threatening the survival of other prey. Source 2, Page 161. There are estimated to be 30,000 oil and gas installations in the foothills of Alberta. Source 2,pg 191
- In 1983 the British Columbia Fish and Wildlife branch announced plans to kill 8% of the wolves in the North East Peace districts in order to “support moose and deer populations”. However, close ties between the Department and the hunting lobby quickly became evident. To fund the wolf kill, the government stated its intention to hold a lottery prize -being a hunting trip to Zimbabwe. Despite a government report that the moose and deer numbers have decreased primarily because of loss of habitat, overhunting, and a series of severe winters, the wolf was put in the crosshairs.... The public outcry was loud and angry, but over 400 wolves were killed before the programme was abandoned. Source 3, pg 133.

Sampling of Actions by Hunting and Trapping Associations

- As with ranchers and farmers -some individual hunters and organisations try to help the wolf. For example, Alaska continues a highly controversial predator control program intended to address the decline in moose and caribou numbers and their subsequent lack of availability to hunters. Sportsman’s groups like Backcountry Hunters and Anglers have taken principled positions against these measures. Source: “How Sportsman Saved the World”. Source 8. Pg 199.
- In the 1950s strychnine bait was used in the Clearwater Forest district by the game commission to reduce wolf predation and secure game numbers for hunting. Source2, pg 128.
- In 1971 the Alberta Fish and Game Association submits a resolution calling for a wolf extermination program in the Nordegg area. The resolution is defeated as members object to poisoning techniques. Source eight.
- In 1977-1978 illegal poisoning campaigns started in several areas to control what Alberta Fish and Game Association called “ an apparent wolf population explosion “. Although strychnine poisoning of wolves was illegal, baits were still available. Source eight.

- In 1989 Alberta Trappers Association, proposed a \$100 trapping incentive on first 50 wolves-the goal being to kill 250 wolves per year. Again, due to public protests, bounty not implemented. Source 2, pg131.
- In September 2009 Alberta outdoorsman reports that the Alberta trappers Association has had its annual government funding the Trapper education cut by \$46,000.00. Gordie Klassen, president of the Alberta trappers Association has his trapper's college in Debolt, Alberta. Source 20, "Big bad Wolves!" Part two. Archives September 09.
- In 1983, 283 Wolves were killed by an aerial hunting campaign in one winter in North Eastern BC. Aerial shooting is expensive and in this case financial backing came from the US trophy hunting association Foundation for the North American Wild sheep. The aerial shooting stopped in 1986, resumed briefly in 1987 and then ceased after public protest and a successful court case challenge. The Disney film "Never Cry Wolf" was shot in this area. Source number 2, pg 158.
- 2007 The Wild sheep Foundation of Wyoming funds wolf bounty via the Sunde branch of Alberta Trappers Association.
- It is now illegal in Canada to shoot to kill wolves from planes except under special permit and circumstances. However, Helen Thayer reports that illegal activities continue in remote areas. Some people shoot directly from planes, or chase the wolves and shoot in their vicinity to keep them running into open areas until the animals collapsed from exhaustion, at which point the hunters land the plane and easily shoot the Wolves from the ground. She confirmed that the plane she saw in her study site held guides with hunters. Source number two, page 157.

The Phenomena of Emotionalism

(The anti-wolf hysteria seen in some segments of society.)

- "Intolerance in the United States persecuted the Wolf with a vengeance all the way to the medicine line, where it had to stop dead in its own tracks. Intolerance keeps a vigilant watch at parts of that wispy men- made political borderline, and sneaks into Canada from time to time with rifles and poison, proselytizing with evangelical fervour for us to pick up our swords and slay the beast, but it's voice is not effective here. This intolerance is weaker in Canada". Quote Erin McCloskey, author raised in southern Alberta. Quote From her book "Wolves in Canada." Source 2, pg 15.
- Donald Thomas hunter and author of "How Sportsman Saved the World-the unsung Conservation Efforts of Hunters and Anglers".-has the following to say "...predators made a convenient scapegoat as they do in some circles today.... Prevailing attitudes reflected the quintessentially American civilisation-versus-nature ethic Ahab displayed in *Moby Dick*."Source17, pg 191.
- "... The stature these animals (wolves) hold in the human imagination-an odd amalgam of fear and loathing flavoured with admiration and respect-

makes them a lightning rod for animosity out of all proportion to their actual impact.”Source 17, pg 194.

- Paraphrase: ‘Federal agencies wanted wolf management in the hands of the three states in the recovery area, with each presenting an acceptable management plan. Montana and Idaho did, but in an act of political posturing to its rabidly anti-wolf constituents, Wyoming’s initial proposed management plan boiled down to *shoot them all*’. Source 17, pg 196.
- “I would first note the triumph of emotionalism over science in this controversy and its adverse effects on outcome.” Source 17.pg 197
- In March 1994 someone shot a three-year-old wolf outside Algonquin Provincial Park and nailed its head to a pole at the local community centre. The wolf was part of a wild pack being studied by a biologist and was killed in response to a request by conservation group that local citizens stop killing wolves in the area. Source number three, page 238.

Poisons. (Please see articles by veterinarian Sarah Wood, and wildlife veterinarian Jerry Haigh written for this website).

- Canadian Council on Animal Care:” Strychnine should not be used... The animal may be conscious and thus subjected to excruciating pain until the hypoxia of the brain supervenes.” Source Calgary Herald 1989
- Strychnine poisoning attacks the central nervous system, causing similar effects as 1080 poisoning: anxiety, muscle stiffness, convulsions, panting and sometimes nausea and vomiting. The symptoms increase in severity coinciding with extreme pain. Strychnine is a potent poison to all animals. The victim does not lose consciousness initially but first succumbs to seizures. These become more severe and longer lasting as the poison becomes absorbed into the system. Finally the victim will lose consciousness when tonic rigidity of the respiratory muscles causes apnea and cerebral anoxia. If respiration restarts, the victim may revive only to repeat process of seizure and suffocation. Source number two, page 160. (In September 2013, in conversation both Dwight Rodtka and wildlife veterinarian Jerry Haigh spoke of witnessing dogs screaming- not howling- but screaming when poisoned with strychnine)
- Jim Pissot, former executive director of Defenders of Wildlife Canada, says “Albertans do not want to see wolves pay the price for provincial mismanagement of their wildlife.” He says “strychnine poisoning is a painful and horrible way to die.” Source 2, page 160.
- Many countries have banned Strychnine. The UK banned its use by Animals(Cruel Poisons) Regulations in 1963. It was noted that continued availability of strychnine deterred the development of alternative control methods, as a result animal welfare was impeded. Source 21, Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, Oxford University.
- “No animal or human should be subjected to the strychnine poisoning whether intentionally as a pesticide, or an act of terrorism.” Journal of Ethnopharmacology.2012. 139:181-182. Source 22, pg 2-3.

- Compound 1080 induces an extremely painful death. It is a slow killer taking up to 48 hours to kill an ungulate, and 7 to 21 hours for carnivores. The animal suffers an agonising death with rapid laboured breathing, choking, incontinence and culminates in seizures and convulsions, with eyes rolling back and teeth clenching. Those who have witnessed these deaths say the animal is apparently in an extreme anxiety and terror, vocalising its pain. Source number 2, page 159.
- Both Strychnine and compound 1080 have been banned from many provinces yet is still in use in Western Canada. Source 2, Page 158.
- 1080 has been banned in most countries including the United States and Mexico. According to Health Canada, BC no longer uses compound 1080. Source 2, pg, 159.
- ¼ ounce of 1080 is enough to kill 800 canines through primary poisoning and enough to kill many more animals through secondary poisoning. It is estimated that 15% of the bait is taken by non-target animals.
- 1080 is a persistent compound and should not be used near water sources or human settlement. Source 2, page 159.
- Compound 1080 was developed in the 1940s by the US Armed Forces. The poison is non-specific and killed thousands of wolves, coyotes, foxes, and domestic dogs. According to David E. Brown, in writing of “Wolf in the South West: the making of an endangered species” it is also suspected of having killed some of the last grizzlies in Mexico. It was cancelled for use on federal lands by the US Environmental Protection Agency in the early 1970s. Source 3, page 132.
- From the years 1955 to 1959 poisoned bait stations were set up northern Canada. Some attempt was made to keep the baits in the areas where they would not harm wildlife other than wolves. Nevertheless in one area poison killed 496 Red Fox, 105 Arctic Fox, 385 wolverines, and 3417 wolves. Source number 4, page 194.
- There is still much paranoia about the idea of rabid wolves but contrary to this perception wolves rarely carry rabies. Rabies was discovered in foxes and coyotes in Alberta in 1952, this resulted in a wolf slaughter over the next four years. 4200 Wolves were poisoned and over 50,000 foxes, 35,000 coyotes and 1850 bears were killed by associated non-target poisoning. (It is noted that the virus was only found in one individual wolf.)
- In the late 1970s illegal poisoning campaigns began in several areas to control what Alberta Fish and Game Association called an apparent “wolf population explosion”. The poisoning of wolves was illegal - yet no charges were laid. Source number 8.
- In 1977 Golden Eagles together with wolves and other animals were found dead in Crows Nest Pass due to an illegal poisoned bait station. Calgary Herald - source number eight, pg 2.

Traps and Snares

(Please see “Gallery of Truth” and its links on this website.)

- 1945, neck snares are allowed on trap lines.

- 1950s snaring of wolves legalised, and cyanide ‘Coyote Getters’ are introduced.
- By the 1950s wolves were almost completely eliminated from the Alberta prairies. Source 2, page 128.
- 1992 North American Symposium on Wolves held in Edmonton Alberta, Frederick Gilbert stated, ” Canids have well muscled necks and reinforced trachea, so no neck snares system is likely to result in a quick death.” Many conservationists have spoken out against the neck snares on humane grounds. Source number three, page145.
- Thousands of animals undergo lingering deaths, slowly freezing in winter or chewing off their limbs in a frantic bid to escape. This is especially true in winter when the trapped paw becomes frozen. It is also common for wolves to break their teeth and efforts to chew off the trap. Other injuries include skin lacerations and broken bones. Source 3, pg 145.
- Jelly Head or Water Head, as it is known to trappers, is when the animal’s head balloons as a result of a restricted circulation and trauma caused by prolonged and partial strangulation (air and blood) and fighting the snare. It does not happen quickly, at least 24 hours a more likely two days. Source 14.Dec 2013. The eyes have been known to freeze with this condition. Source 13.
- Cruel trap No.14 with its jagged steel teeth is still in use in North America. Though many jurisdictions have outlawed it. Source 3, page 144.
- Traps may be baited with chemical compounds, sexual pheromones or wolf body parts. Source 3, pg144, and Dwight Rodtka.
- “...other pathetic videos of wolves caught in leg hold traps where the wolf passively cowers while the hunter or trapper approaches and then shoots it in the head.” Source 2, page 180.
- “University of Alberta proved that cougars frequently scavenge carcasses from wolf kills making them vulnerable to being caught in snares which trappers commonly set up near wolf kills to harvest wolves. Provincial data show that accidental snaring was dramatically increasing cause of cougar mortality over the past 20 years. The mortalities of radio collared cougars in the U of A study where 100% human caused, and the addition of snaring mortality added to hunting mortality resulted in a low annual survival. Cougars are not trap shy and are easily caught.” Source 2, page 100.
- Cougars are primarily snared at wolf bait stations. In the recent cougar study at Rocky mountain house one third of the collared cougars were caught and killed in wolf snares. Source 14.
- See “Defenders of Fur Bearers” website for more information and lists of pets caught in snares and traps.

List of sources (majority books)

1) *The Bond -Our kinship with Animals, Our call to Defend Them* by Wayne Parcellle.(Pres of the Humane Society of the United States).

- 2) *Wolves in Canada* by Erin McCloskey, Lone Pine 2011. ISBN 978-1-55105-872-6.
- 3) *The Wolf Almanac- a celebration of Wolves and their world - New and revised* by Robert H Busch.
- 4) *Of Wolves and men* by Barry Lopez 1978, new edition 2004.
- 5) *Wolves* By Daniel Wood.
- 6) *A New Era for Wolves and People*, edited by Marco Musiani, Luigi Boitani, and Paul Paquet.
- 7) *Striking at the Roots* by Mark Hawthorne.
- 8) AWA website- Wolf history.
- 9) AWA correspondence- March 19, 2013 a letter to Minister McQueen.
- 10) AWA "Wild lands Advocate", April/May 2013. Nigel Douglas
- 11) "Recommended Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management plan" 2011. - Government of the Yukon and Yukon fish and wildlife management board.
- 12) Nathan Webb and Evelyn Merrill (James Allen of F&W) Rocky Mountain House Wolf study spring 2009" Management Summary"
- 13) Notes taken in conversation with Dwight Rodtka at meetings 2013.
- 14) Dwight Rodtka correspondence... Retired/ career Predator Control Specialist with Alberta Agriculture.
- 15) *Carnivore Conservation- conservation biology 5*; Cambridge University press. Edited by Gittleman, Funk, MacDonald, and Wayne.
- 16) *About Canada- animal rights* by John Sorenson. 2010
- 17) *How Sportsman Saved the World - the unsung conservation efforts of hunters and anglers* by E. Donnall Thomas Jr. 2010.
- 18) *Alberta in the 20th century. Volume 1.*
- 19) *Wolf bounties in Alberta Canada*, Sept 2013.
- 20) "Alberta Outdoorsman" Archives, Sept 2009. Article "Big Bad Wolf", by Miskosky.
- 21) *Wildlife Conservation Research Unit. Oxford University-based and world leader in the field.*
- 22) "Veterinary Practice News". Dec 2013.