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International Scientists to Alberta: Drop Archaic Wolf Bounties

International scientists have called on the Alberta government to eliminate its archaic wolf bounties. In letters released today, they describe Alberta wolf bounties, which are funded by private groups such as the Wyoming-based Wild Sheep Foundation and by local governments, as outdated and ineffective in managing wildlife. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) and Wolf Matters welcome this call by IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) wolf experts, and urge the Alberta government to modernize its wolf management and end wolf bounties.

“The international scientific community clearly states that indiscriminate wolf bounties paid by the Wild Sheep Foundation and several local chapters of the Alberta Fish and Game Association and Alberta Trapper’s Association are ineffective for managing foothills big game populations,” says Dwight Rodtka, spokesperson for Wolf Matters. “Instead of a random wolf cull, Alberta should manage based on sound research in overall foothills wildlife populations and habitat, and public consultation on issues and goals.”

“The Alberta government says it knows that local government bounties do not reduce livestock predation, so they should end the bounties,” states Carolyn Campbell, conservation specialist with AWA. “The provincial government needs to take a leadership role to manage wolf problems scientifically, as well as support ranchers to reduce predator attractants and opportunities. Albertans want our government to modernize Alberta’s seriously outdated practices.” AWA has long believed that Alberta needs to end its war on wildlife; wolf bounties are but one more example of that war.

“The Canid Specialist Group of the IUCN respectfully encourages the Government of Alberta to show leadership to eliminate indiscriminate wolf bounties and modernize wolf management,” states Dr. Lu Carbyn, Canadian representative of the IUCN’s Canid Specialist Group. “We have offered advice and technical assistance on this issue as needed.”

Attachments: Backgrounder on Alberta bounty programs
February 4, 2014 letter – IUCN to Alberta Premier Redford
January 3, 2014 letter – Alberta ESRD Minister Campbell to IUCN
October 30, 2013 letter – IUCN to Alberta Premier Redford
IUCN Manifesto on Wolf Conservation

For more information:

Carolyn Campbell, Alberta Wilderness Association (403) 283-2025

Dwight Rodtka, Wolf Matters, (403) 845-6156

Dr. Lu Carbyn, Canadian representative, IUCN Canid Specialist Group, (780) 439-7333
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February 11, 2014

Alberta Wolf Bounties

A) Bounties by Private Hunting and Trapping Groups

Several of Alberta's hunting and trapping locals offer wolf bounties, which are paid in part or entirely by the Alberta chapter of the US-based Wild Sheep Foundation. These funds are spent to affect a valuable Alberta public resource, foothills native big game animals and their natural predators, yet their effects are undocumented, and public records of total expenditures or wolves claimed are unavailable. We estimate hundreds of wolves have been killed through these bounties.

2007: Wild Sheep Foundation funding to Sundre fish and game and trappers locals begins, with payouts \$150 to \$300 per wolf. A total of \$8750 from a combination of local and American sources was reported available for up to 25 wolves killed.

2010: \$3000 paid by Wild Sheep Foundation to each of Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, Drayton Valley.

2011-12: In Rocky Mountain House region, 35 wolves killed with a \$10,350 payout. Wild Sheep Foundation pays \$5000, fish and game local pays \$3000, trappers local pays \$2350.

2012-13: Sundre region: Total bounty funds increased after 60 wolves were killed before end of season.

2013-14: \$5000 paid by Wild Sheep Foundation to each of Hinton, Edson, Drayton Valley, Rocky Mtn House, Sundre, and South Country [Calgary] regions to expand the bounties

B) Municipal Bounties

Several of Alberta's local governments offer bounties for wolves. Public funds are spent to affect a public resource, native wildlife, yet records of total expenditures and total animals claimed are not publicly available. This summary is based on various county documents and news articles.

Municipal Wolf Bounty Payouts and Claims, to spring 2013:

	Current Payout	Total payout	Total wolves
Big Lakes	\$300/adult	\$106,800 as of Feb 2013	356 as of Feb 2013
Clear Hills	\$250/adult, \$250/non-adult	At least \$79,000 as of Jan 2013	At least 212 as of Jan 2013
Greenview	\$300/adult wolf	n/a (started Feb 2012)	n/a
Northern Lights	\$250/adult, \$150/non-adult	n/a (started Jan 2012)	n/a
Bonnyville	\$75/wolf	At least \$960 as of spring 2013	At least 64 as of spring 2013
St. Paul	\$75/wolf	At least \$15 (for Jan-Apr 2013, coyote focused program)	At least 1 (for Jan-Apr 2013, coyote focused program)
Two Hills	At least \$15/wolf	n/a	n/a
Cardston	\$500/wolf	\$5000 in 2012 (May 2, 2013)	10 in 2012 (May 2, 2013)
Total		At least \$191,775	At least 643

n/a – not available



Alberta wolf. Image Copyright Peter Dettling. For permission to reproduce, contact Peter Dettling at padphotography@shaw.ca



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Honourable Alison Redford
Premier of Alberta
Sent via e-mail:
Premier@gov.ab.ca

February 4th, 2014

Dear Premier Redford:

RE: Indiscriminate wolf bounty programs in Alberta

IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization with the central mission of conserving biodiversity. The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of more than 8,500 volunteer experts from almost every country of the world, and includes the Canid Specialist Group, with a watch on all members of the Canidae including wolves.

We appreciate Minister Robin Campbell's reply of January 3rd, 2014 to the IUCN SSC Wolf Specialist Group's letter of October 30th, 2013. In that letter, we had respectfully requested that the Government of Alberta consider halting indiscriminate wolf bounty programs by both private groups and municipalities, and apply a science-based gray wolf management program instead. On the basis of IUCN Wolf Manifesto Articles 4 and 6, we had wished to bring to your attention that the wolf bounty is considered to be an out-dated and ineffective method of wildlife management.

We are disappointed that the Canadian Government's response failed to acknowledge the inadequacy of this kind of wildlife management, and further with the advice that IUCN re-direct its concerns to Alberta municipalities; we understand that in Canada, jurisdictional responsibility over most wildlife rests with provincial governments. We are encouraged to know that the Government of Alberta recognizes that wolves are an important part of a healthy ecosystem. We are also encouraged to know from Minister Campbell that "Government staff have met with several of the municipalities offering wolf bounties and provided them with information indicating these types of programs are not effective in reducing wolf depredation."

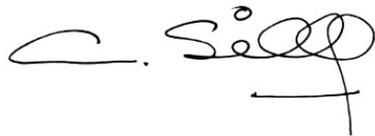
We note this recognition by the Alberta government that bounties are ineffective in reducing wolf depredation on livestock, which was the local communities' goal. The bounty payments by private groups, including the Wyoming-based Wild Sheep Foundation and local chapters of the Alberta Trappers' Association and Alberta Fish and Game Association, to

reduce predation on ungulates, are a similarly ineffective method of predator management and would be unacceptable in many countries around the world.

Again, we wish to respectfully encourage the Government of Alberta to demonstrate inspirational leadership by leading its municipalities and private groups to modernize wolf management, by taking the necessary steps to eliminate the archaic and out-dated methods of wolf bounty payments.

The IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group, especially its Wolf Working Group (formerly the Wolf Specialist Group), stand ready to provide advice and technical assistance on this issue as needed.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Sillero', with a horizontal line underneath.

Professor Claudio Sillero
Chair, IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Boitani', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr Luigi Boitani
Professor of Conservation Biology and Animal Ecology, University of Rome
Coordinator, Wolf Working Group, Canid Specialist Group (formerly Wolf Specialist Group)
Steering Committee Member, IUCN Species Survival Commission

cc: Minister Robin Campbell, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
(west.yellowhead@assembly.ab.ca)
Dr Lu Carbyn, IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group

Attachment: IUCN Manifesto on Wolf Conservation



ALBERTA
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Office of the Minister

MLA, West Yellowhead

January 3, 2014

Dr. Lu Carbyn, Canadian Representative
International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
137 Wolf Willow Crescent
Edmonton, AB
T5T 1T1

Dear Dr. Carbyn:

Premier Alison Redford forwarded me a copy of your letter regarding wolf management in Alberta. Premier Redford has reviewed your comments and asked me to respond on behalf of the Government of Alberta.

The Government of Alberta recognizes that wolves are an important part of a healthy ecosystem. As the number of wolves in Alberta increases, they are moving into areas of the province where they have not been present for many decades. This has created concern over wolf depredation on livestock and declining numbers of wild ungulates, such as elk, in some locations. In response to these concerns, several Alberta municipalities and private groups offer wolf bounties. The Government of Alberta does not have a wolf bounty program in place and has no plans to establish this type of program.

Government staff have met with several of the municipalities offering wolf bounties and provided them with information indicating these types of programs are not effective in reducing wolf depredation. If bounty programs are causing large-scale declines in wolf populations, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development has the authority to restrict wolf hunting and trapping seasons. We encourage the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources to contact the individual municipalities with your concerns.

Thanks again for your letter and sharing the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's thoughts about wolf management in Alberta.

Sincerely,

Robin Campbell
Minister

cc: Honourable Alison M. Redford, QC, Premier

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**UNION INTERNATIONALE POUR LA CONSERVATION DE LA NATURE ET DE SES RESSOURCES
INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Commission du service de sauvegarde – Species Survival Commission

WOLF SPECIALIST GROUP

30th October, 2013

Dr. Lu Carbyn
137 Wolf Willow Crescent
Edmonton, Alberta
T5T 1T1

The Honorable Alison Redford, MLA
Premier of Alberta

Dear Premier:

The IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) is the world's largest environmental network and is the United Nation's authority on issues pertaining to global biodiversity.

At a recent meeting of the IUCN Wolf Specialist Group (WSG), held October 13, 2013 in Duluth, MN, it was brought to our attention that the province of Alberta is one of the very few jurisdictions left, worldwide, that still uses the bounty system to kill wolves and coyotes.

On the basis of IUCN Wolf Manifesto Articles 4 and 6, we wish to bring to your attention how archaic, outdated and ineffective this method of wildlife management is. IUCN does recognize that at times the management of wolves is required to deal with specific problems, such as livestock depredation. Bounties, however, are a broad scale, non-specific means of killing wolves.

The IUCN Wolf Manifesto Article 4 reads, in part, “The possibility now exists for the development of management programs which would mitigate serious problems, while at the same time permitting the wolf to live in many areas of the world where its presence would be compatible.”

Article 6 in that manifesto reads, in part, “Reduction measures should be imposed under strict scientific management. The methods must be selective, specific to the problem, highly discriminatory, and have minimal adverse side effects on the ecosystem. Alternative ecosystem management, including alteration of human activities and attitudes, and non-lethal methods of wolf management, should be fully considered before lethal wolf reduction is employed. The goal of wolf management programs must be to restore and maintain a healthy balance in all components of the ecosystem.”

In addition, Guideline 5 states that “in wolf management programs, poisons, bounty systems and sport hunting using mechanized vehicles should be prohibited.”

Wildlife in Alberta is a public resource and there are provincial programs in place to compensate livestock owners for damages from wolf predation. Highly trained personnel are available to carry out that work. We applaud this aspect of your management program. However, you may not be aware of the fact that, running parallel with this official program, there are also two types of wolf bounty programs operating with the consent of your provincial wildlife authorities, each of which violate the principles and guidelines of the IUCN Wolf Manifesto.

To the best of our knowledge it appears that there are at least six wolf bounty programs that are funded by municipal district governments with the goal of reducing wolf predation on livestock. These programs are not based on scientific management principles. Instead, they encourage random killing of wolves and include methods such as snaring that do not discriminate by species. Three other wolf bounty programs in Alberta are sponsored by two Alberta based user groups and partly funded by the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation; their goal is to reduce wolf predation pressures on ungulate populations along Alberta’s foothills.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE USE OF WOLF BOUNTY PROGRAMS IN ALBERTA, CANADA

The use of bounty payments was a very widespread wildlife management practice in North America throughout the first half of the 20th century. Over time, this practice has declined dramatically, and was largely eliminated in Canada by the early 1970’s.

Since 2007, there has been a resurgence of the use of this practice in Alberta to help control wolves and to supplement trapper incomes. The reason for a renewed interest in bounty payments appears to have several other root causes. One important reason has been to reduce depredation on livestock in specific areas where wolf and cattle/sheep ranges overlap. There is also a prevailing perception, by various interest groups, that wolf numbers are increasingly reducing the opportunities for recreational hunting. Most of the latter occurs along the foothills of the province.

There are two separate incentive payments currently in place. The first is the use of public funds (municipal and county jurisdictions) to provide an incentive to kill wolves in order to reduce/eliminate depredation on livestock. The second initiative appears to involve private funding from foreign sources, and furthermore from the Alberta Fish and Game Association and from local Trapper's Associations. Private bounties are offered with the intention of maintaining/increasing ungulate populations in areas where there is high to moderate human hunting pressures on elk and other herbivores. Hunting pressures on ungulates in Alberta have been increasing in recent years.

Current local government incentives include the Municipal Districts of Big Lakes, Bonnyville, and the counties of Cardston, Clear Hills, St. Paul and Two Hills. These initiatives have been of variable duration and extensiveness. Annual payouts vary, ranging from \$15 to \$500 per wolf. Details are difficult to obtain as the public disclosure processes on this matter is flawed. In some cases coyotes were also included in these programs. Annual payments ranged from \$17,000 to \$106,000 in various areas, although accurate figures have not always been available.

Other bounty initiatives involve the use of local and foreign funding to reduce wolf predation pressures on ungulate populations along Alberta's foothills in the Sundre, Rocky Mountain and Drayton Valley areas. Funding for the latter programs apparently started around 2007 and was promoted by the Wyoming based Wild Sheep Foundation which also has an Alberta Chapter. It seems that foreign funds were matched by local fish and wildlife groups. Administrative details are worked out by local chapters of the Trapper's Association and the Alberta Fish and Game Association.

It appears that the amounts available for the Rocky Mountain and Sundre initiatives were set at about \$9,000 while funding to the Drayton Valley occurred later (about 2009) and was funded by the Sheep Foundation and not by Fish and Game. In at least one case, funding to local clubs from The Sheep Foundation and Fish and Game was increased after their original funding support ran out. This situation came about because more wolves were killed than had been originally budgeted for. In spring 2013, the Sundre Fish and Game Club and The Sheep Foundation both had provided more money because trappers had killed about 60 wolves in the previous winter.

In Alberta, the official trapping / hunting season on wolves is open from October 1st to the end of March. We commend the province for having a closed season. This is an indication that, in some respect, you do accord a game species status to this carnivore. Having a bounty system negates the status of wolves as a game species. You (i.e. the appropriate authorities in your Government) are probably aware that wolf fur prices in recent years have been about \$90 to \$150 per hide. Bounties, which offer \$300 to \$500 per animal, offer a greater incentive to kill wolves, making it lucrative to kill wolves without having to utilize the fur.

Wolves are being killed in Alberta based on perceptions and long-held prejudices, not according to science-based research. It appears that there are currently no science-based monitoring programs in place in the province to evaluate the effectiveness of wolf bounty programs on the impact of wolf predation on ungulate populations within the areas where bounties have been implemented.

According to Alberta Fish and Wildlife sources that we have contacted, the ad hoc bounty system in place since 2007 does not violate any provincial wildlife laws. Alberta Fish and Wildlife has publicly stated that they are aware of these activities and that there is no evidence that the bounty systems pose a significant risk to wolf populations Alberta wide.

The wolf population in Alberta is estimated to be around 5,000 animals. Although wolf numbers province-wide may not be significantly reduced by these programs, local wolf populations are likely to decline as a result of bounty payments.

A more important concern than the simple reduction of wolf populations is the issue regarding the status of carnivore conservation within the wildlife management framework. Bounties rarely solve the problems for which they were intended. Bounty-based killing is most often conducted at random, is not always targeted specifically to problem areas, and can be open to abuse and fraud. In fact, there has been no case study to date that has shown that bounty payments on wolves in North America have ever been effective in achieving the desired results. Hence, the use of bounties simply has disappeared as a management tool all across North America.

It is well known that wolves have high reproductive rates. Random, low level killing of wolves is not, therefore, likely to significantly increase ungulate numbers. The most effective methods to facilitate increased ungulate populations are to conduct intensive wolf culling, targeting entire packs within a large zone. Such programs involve either aerial gunning, or poison. The latter methods have been proven to be politically and publically unacceptable. The former method is difficult to carry out in wooded areas, such as those present along the foothills of Alberta.

Instead of the bounty payments that are currently in place in Alberta, we suggest that the Alberta government adhere to sound wildlife management practices according to North American and International standards. The activities currently in place are in direct violation of the IUCN manifesto on wolf management and wildlife conservation, and contrary to all the best practice methods currently in place on the North American continent.

The IUCN Wolf Specialist Group thus respectfully requests that the Government of Alberta consider halting indiscriminate wolf bounty programs and apply a science-based gray wolf management program instead.

We look forward to a reply regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lu Carbyn
Canadian representative,
IUCN Wolf Specialist Group
IUCN Canid Specialist Group

CC. Drs. Luigi Boitani and David Mech, Chairmen, IUCN Wolf Specialist Group
Dr. Claudio Sillero, Chairman, IUCN Canid Specialist Group
Dean Cluff , Canadian co-representative, IUCN Wolf Specialist Group

We need to manage them based on their biology, not our attitudes and biases.

IUCN WOLF SPECIALIST GROUP

MANIFESTO ON WOLF CONSERVATION

1. Wolves, like all other wildlife, have a right to exist in a wild state in viable populations. This right is in no way related to their known value to mankind. Instead, it derives from the right of all living creatures to co-exist with man as a part of natural ecosystems.
2. The wolf pack is a highly developed and unique social organization. The wolf is one of the most adaptable and important mammalian predators. It has one of the widest natural geographical distributions of any mammal. It has been, and in some areas still is, the most important predator of big-game animals in the northern hemisphere. In this role, it has undoubtedly played an important part in the evolution of such species and, in particular, of those characteristics which have made many of them desirable game animals.
3. It is recognized that wolf populations have differentiated into entities which are genetically adapted to particular environments. It is of first importance that these local populations be maintained in viable populations in their natural environments in a wild state. Maintenance of genetic identity of locally adapted races is a responsibility of agencies which plan to reintroduce wolves into the wild.
4. The response of man throughout most of recorded history, as reflected by the actions of individuals and governments, has been to try to exterminate the wolf, although some societies held neutral or positive attitudes toward wolves. In more than one-third of the countries where the wolf existed, man has either succeeded, or is on the verge of succeeding with wolf extermination. This is an unfortunate situation because the possibility now exists for the development of management programs which would mitigate serious problems, while at the same time permitting the wolf to live in many areas of the world where its presence would be compatible.
5. This harsh judgement on the wolf has been based, first, on fear of the wolf as a predator of man and second, on hatred because of its predation on domestic and semidomestic animals and on large wild animals. It is now evident that the wolf can no longer be considered a serious threat to man. It is true, however, that the wolf has been, and in some cases still is, a predator of some importance on domestic and semidomestic animals and wildlife.
6. Conflict with man sometimes occurs from undue economic competition or from imbalanced predator-prey ratios adversely affecting prey species and/or the wolf itself. In such cases, temporary reduction of wolf populations may become necessary especially when it can contribute to maintaining positive or neutral attitudes toward wolves, but reduction measures should be imposed under strict scientific management. The methods

must be selective, specific to the problem, highly discriminatory, and have minimal adverse side effects on the ecosystem. Alternative ecosystem management, including alteration of human activities and attitudes and non-lethal methods of wolf management, should be fully considered before lethal wolf reduction is employed. The goal of wolf management programs must be to restore and maintain a healthy balance in all components of the ecosystem. Wolf reduction should never result in the permanent extirpation of the species from any portion of its natural range.

7. The effect of major alterations of the environment through economic development may have serious consequences for the survival of wolves and their prey species in areas where wolves now exist. Recognition of the importance and status of wolves should be taken into account by legislation and in planning for the future of any region.

8. Scientific knowledge of the role of the wolf in ecosystems has increased greatly, although it is inadequate in many countries where the wolf still exists. Management should be established only on a firm scientific basis, having regard for international, national and regional situations. However, existing knowledge is at least adequate to develop preliminary programs to conserve and manage the wolf throughout its range.

9. The maintenance of wolves in some areas may require that society at large bear the cost e.g. by giving compensation for the loss of domestic and semidomestic animals; conversely there are areas having high agricultural value where it is not desirable to maintain wolves without some form of control and where their recovery would not be feasible.

10. In some areas there has been a marked change in public attitudes towards the wolf. This change in attitudes has influenced governments to revise and even to eliminate archaic laws. It is recognized that education to establish a realistic picture of the wolf and its role in nature is most essential to wolf survival. Education programs, however, must be factual and accurate.

11. Socio-economic, ecological and political factors must be considered and resolved prior to reintroduction of the wolf into biologically suitable areas from which it has been extirpated. Natural recovery, however, should be given priority according to the IUCN Reintroduction Guidelines.

12. Wolf-dog hybridization is potentially detrimental to wolf conservation and is therefore opposed because of its possible negative effects.

Guidelines

The following guidelines are recommended for action of wolf conservation.

A. General

1. Where wolves are endangered regionally, nationally or internationally, full protection should be accorded to the surviving population. (Such endangered status is signalled by inclusion in the Red Data Book or by a declaration of the Government concerned).
2. Each country should define areas suitable for the existence of wolves and enact suitable legislation to perpetuate existing wolf populations or to facilitate reintroduction. These areas would include zones in which wolves would be given full legal protection e.g. as in national parks, reserves or special conservation areas, and additionally zones within which wolf populations would be regulated according to ecological principles to minimise conflicts with other forms of land use.
3. Sound ecological conditions for wolves should be restored in such areas through the rebuilding of suitable habitats and the reintroduction of large herbivores.
4. In specifically designated wolf conservation areas, extensive economic development likely to be detrimental to the wolf and its habitat should be excluded.
5. In wolf management programmes, poisons, bounty systems and sport hunting using mechanised vehicles should be prohibited.
6. Consideration should be given to the payment of compensation for damage caused by wolves.
7. Legislation should be enacted in every country to require the registration of each wolf killed.

B. Education

A dynamic educational campaign should be promoted to obtain the support of all sectors of the population through a better understanding of the values of wolves and the significance of their rational management. In particular the following actions are advocated:

- a.* Press and broadcast campaigns;
- b.* Publication and wide distribution of information and educational material; and
- c.* Promotion of exhibitions, demonstrations and relevant extension techniques.

C. Tourism

Where appropriate, general public interest in wolf conservation should be stimulated by promoting wolf-related tourist activities. (Canada already has such activities in some of its national and provincial parks.)

D. Research

Research on wolves should be intensified, with particular reference to:

- a.* Surveys on status and distribution of wolf populations;
- b.* Studies on feeding habits, including especially interactions of wolves with game animals and livestock;
- c.* Investigations into social structure, population dynamics, general behaviour and

ecology of wolves;

d. Taxonomic work, including studies of possible hybridisation with other canids;

e. Research into the methods of reintroduction of wolves and/or their natural prey; and

f. Studies into human attitudes about wolves and on economic effects of wolves.

E. International co-operation

A programme of international co-operation should be planned to include:

a. Periodical official meetings of the countries concerned for the joint planning of programmes, study of legislation, and exchanging of experiences;

b. A rapid exchange of publications and other research information including new techniques and equipment;

c. Loaning or exchanging of personnel between countries to help carry out research activities ; and

d. Joint conservation programmes in frontier areas where wolves are endangered.

* The Wolf Specialist Group, of the Species Survival Commission, of The World Conservation Union (IUCN). The Manifesto was adopted by the Wolf Specialist Group at the first international meeting on the conservation of the wolf, 1973, Stockholm, and revised by the group in 1983, 1996 and 2000. The Wolf Specialist Group is an organization of authorities on wolves from over 25 countries. It deals with wolf conservation at the international level.