

# A Guide For Readers, Students, Teachers and Parents



**Example of an endangered wolf:**

## **The Mexican Gray Wolf**

*Canis lupus baileyi*

North America's most endangered land mammal

Our Mexican Gray Wolves are in danger of becoming extinct. Again ...

There were only seven left in the wild in Arizona, New Mexico, and Mexico, and only one of them was female when people realized that they were almost gone ... Then president Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act into law in 1973 and the Mexican Gray Wolf became an endangered species. People captured the last seven wolves alive and put them behind fences where they were breeding them. Their goal was to increase their number in the safety of captivity. In 1998 the first wolves were released back into the wild.

Now, in 2016, we have about 100 animals in the wild and 300 in captivity. That makes the Mexican Gray Wolf the most endangered land mammal in all of North America.

A Mexican Gray Wolf weighs about as much as a German Shepherd, around 60 to 85 pounds. Lone wolves

are the exception. Most wolves live in a family with the mother, father, and pups from this and last year. They hunt and eat together and spend much time together, just like we humans do. When you see a wolf in the wild who is alone, that wolf is either out scouting to see where the deer and elk are, or taking a little stroll by himself. Chances are also that he or she has left their family in search of a mate and territory.

It takes 63 days for a wolf puppy to grow in her mother's belly. Just as long as it takes for a dog puppy to grow. Wolf mothers give birth to two to seven puppies in April or May. They are born in a den that she digs at a safe spot under a rock ledge, in a large burrow, or under a tree. The puppies are very small (around one pound) when they are born and really need their mom.

She only leaves the den to eat and drink when they are first born. The rest of her family feeds her and brings her meat. She has to go and get a drink of water occasionally, though. After about three to four weeks, the pups come out of the den for the first time. Then everybody is very happy. Uncles and aunts and big brothers and sisters are around; the whole family is there and they all help raise the puppies and protect them. Even so, half of the puppies die during their first year.

Nature made it that way so that the strong and healthy ones survive. Life as a wolf is not easy. Wolves can get hurt during hunting, sometimes there is not enough to eat, and other times there are diseases or humans kill them. A wolf lives about seven to 10 years in the wild. That is all.

They like to live in the forests and grasslands in New Mexico, Mexico and Arizona where they are safe from humans and can hide from them. They are very smart and have learned that humans are their enemies and have tried to kill them all off. It is very rare that you see a wolf in the wild. They see us and hear and smell us way before we have a clue that they are there and usually they run away from us. Their sense of hearing and smell and their vision are much better than ours. They do not only see in black and white, but also have blue and red photo receptors in their eyes. They hear well up to a frequency of 25 khz.

Wolves are carnivores, which means that their food consists of meat. A female wolf will only have puppies when she has enough meat to eat. Otherwise there will not be any puppies that year. The puppies nurse until they are old enough to eat regurgitated meat from their parents' stomachs. The adult wolves predigest food in their stomachs and when they get back to the den the youngsters lick their mouths and out comes the food, predigested!

Puppies have to learn everything from scratch, just like we did when we were little. They have to learn how and when to howl, wag their tail, growl, bark, yip, play, and mark their territory with urine and scat. Marking their territory is important because wolf families need a large amount of space to hunt.

Wolves need to tell other wolves in search of a territory that theirs is taken and to stay away. That is also one of the reasons why they howl: They want other wolves to stay away. Of course, sometimes they seem to talk to each other and tell their families where they are and if there is food in the area. You probably can think of a few more reasons why wolves howl.

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Another animal that is closely linked to the wolf is raven. Raven seems to be able to tell the wolves where the deer and elk are since he has the advantage of being able to fly and see what is going on where. When the wolves kill an animal for food, then raven gets his share along with many other animals. Wolves share their food with others and often, coyote is next after they feed on a carcass, then fox, raven, eagle, bear...

There are other things to consider about wolves. The Native American tribes and First Nations of Canada and the US have stories about them that are different from ours. They talk about Brother Wolf and how he taught them how to hunt and raise a family, how wolf gave them their companion, the dog; how wolf keeps the herds of deer and elk strong and how our lives are tied to the wolf: "Watch our Brother, the wolf. Whatever happens to him, will happen to all of us." They did not hunt the wolf, because they did not have sheep or cattle, but followed the wolf who led them to the herds of bison and deer and elk. Some of the tribes shared much of their territory with the wolves.



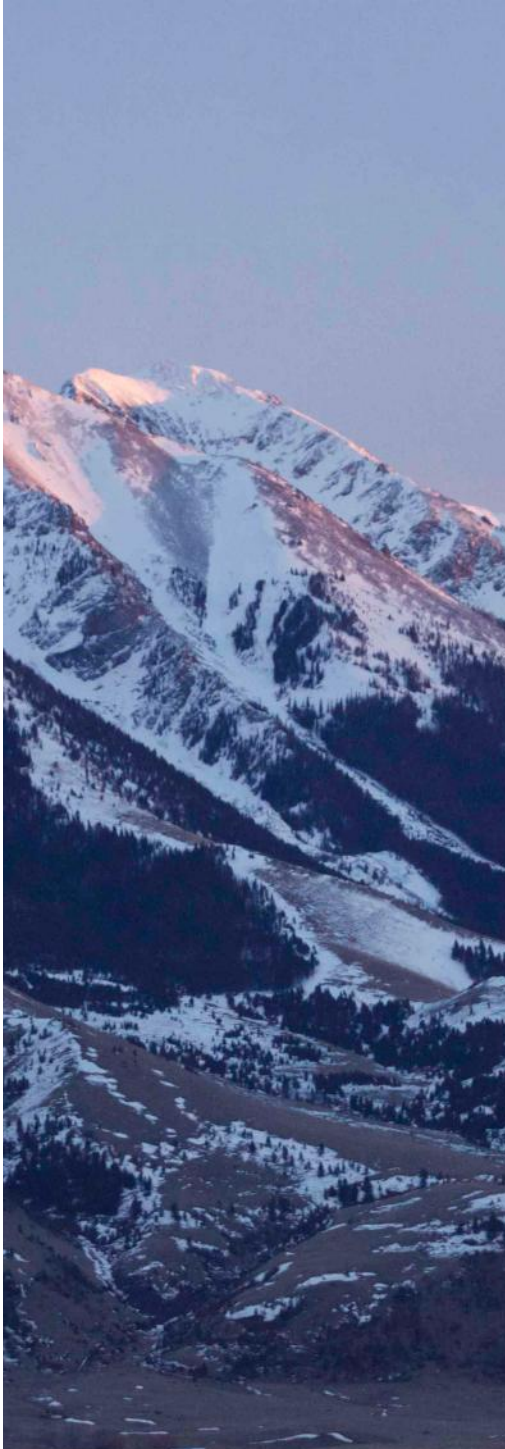
The Oneida Nation in Wisconsin, like some other First Nations have a wolf clan:

The Oneida Nation of Wisconsin has three clans: Turtle, Bear, and Wolf. The clan animals are like an ancient ancestor. Members of the Wolf Clan are looked at as relatives. Each clan has different duties and responsibilities. The wolf clan represents Family. Wolves belong in packs and work together as a family unit. For example, when pups are born, all the wolves in a pack help take care of the pups. The Oneida people all work together to take care each other, especially the young. They are the future and Oneida are always looking forward seven generations. Wolves know the importance of family but they also have the strength and knowledge to stand alone. Wolves are strong leaders and are also known as the Pathfinders. Creator has designed a life path for us all, and the Wolves remind us to stay on our intended path.

Here is Ernest, a member of the Wolf Clan of the Oneida Nation:



# Information About All The Other Wolf Subspecies



## Two Subspecies: The Gray & Red Wolves

### Red Wolves:

The Red wolf is smaller than the Gray wolf. They only weigh 40-50 pounds and hence eat small animals such as rabbits, squirrels, muskrats, and small deer. Their traditional home range included the Southeastern United States. There are less than 50 left in the wild as of February 2016.

### Gray Wolves:

Our Arctic Wolves in the North, our Northern Rockies Wolves, our Timber Wolves, and Mexican Gray Wolves are all considered Gray Wolves even though they differ a lot in size, color, and what they eat.

### Examples of other wolf subspecies who inhabit other places on this earth are:

The Eurasian Wolf, *Canis lupus lupus*, is one of the bigger wolves. Please do some research on this wolf and you will be amazed!

The Tundra Wolf, *Canis lupus albus*, lives in parts of Europe and Asia. Did you know that there are wolves in Israel, Iraq, Oman, Yemen, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia? They are called Arabian Wolf, or *Canis lupus arabs*.

The Tibetan Wolf lives in Central Asia from Turkestan, Tien Shan throughout Tibet, Mongolia, Northern China, and a few other places. Please do some research on this wolf and find out how big he/she is.

Among the extinct wolves are the Newfoundland Wolf who has not inhabited this earth since 1911, and the Bernard's Wolf. You can find information about them in books and on the internet.

Among the extinct wolves in the US are the Texas Wolf, *Canis lupus monstrabilis*; the Florida Black Wolf, *Canis lupus floridanus*; and the Cascade Mountain Wolf, *Canis lupus fuscus*.





The most amazing thing, though is that the wild dogs of Australia, Thailand, India, Indonesia, New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands, the Dingo or *Canis lupus dingo*, are also considered a subspecies of the wolf. So are our domestic dogs, or *Canis lupus familiaris*. Our dogs come from wild wolves way back. People have done selective breeding with them. They have developed into hundreds of dog breeds of various sizes, colors, and abilities. Just think of the specialized hunting dogs, or the little Chihuahua.

All wolves had been extinct in the lower 48 states in the US. Then in the 1990s, they were being reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park around the same time that the Mexican Gray Wolves were introduced to New Mexico and Arizona. People caught Timber Wolves in Canada and brought them down to YNP.

They multiplied and were doing well, but the dangerous thing for them is that they do not know the park boundaries. Human boundaries do not mean anything to wolves. They are not welcome outside of the park because there is cattle and other domestic animals. Sometimes they get killed just outside the park boundaries by hunters who are waiting for them to cross. Also, wolves need to migrate away from their family and find a mate and territory for themselves, not unlike humans. There literally aren't any other wolves outside of the park to form a family with. Now the wolves need to walk even further away from the safety of their family bonds and home territory to start their own family. This makes them very vulnerable to getting killed by humans.



# Wolf Stories

Here are a few stories of wolves who have gone through almost heroic efforts to find a mate. Some have a happy ending, others do not.

## Slavc and Juliette

Slavc, a radio collared male wild wolf from Slovenia in Europe, left his family in the middle of winter in search of a mate and territory.

He crossed the Austrian Alps that were covered in six feet of snow and continued on to Cortina d'Ampezzo in Italy. Not far, in Lessinia, he found his Juliette, the only other wolf in the area. People named her Juliette since she was living close to Verona, where Romeo and Juliette was written. It was too late in the season to have puppies, but they continued on and had a litter of pups one year later.

The following spring, Slavc's collar fell off like it was intended to after 53 weeks of wearing it. Now we have to rely on eyewitness accounts on where the family is and what they are doing. It is better that way since they need some privacy to raise their family and since Slavc has given us so much information already. For a video about his story go here: <https://vimeo.com/48245301>

## Echo

Echo, a female Gray Wolf, had traveled to the Grand Canyon from the Northern Rockies in late 2014 and was seen and filmed by visitors. She traveled on to Utah, probably in search of a mate and territory since there are no other wolves in the Grand Canyon area. This is where she died, near Beaver, Utah. A local hunter said that he mistook her for a coyote and shot her. Echo was named by a 10-year old boy after conservation groups held a naming contest for her. He said he chose the name Echo "because she came back to the Grand Canyon like an Echo does."

## Journey

Journey, also known as OR7, is a male Gray Wolf who had been fitted with a radio collar and was tracked in Oregon and California. He is the first confirmed wolf in western Oregon since 1947, and the first in California since 1924. After he left his family in northeastern Oregon in September 2011 to search for a mate and territory, he wandered more than 1,000 miles through Oregon and Northern California.

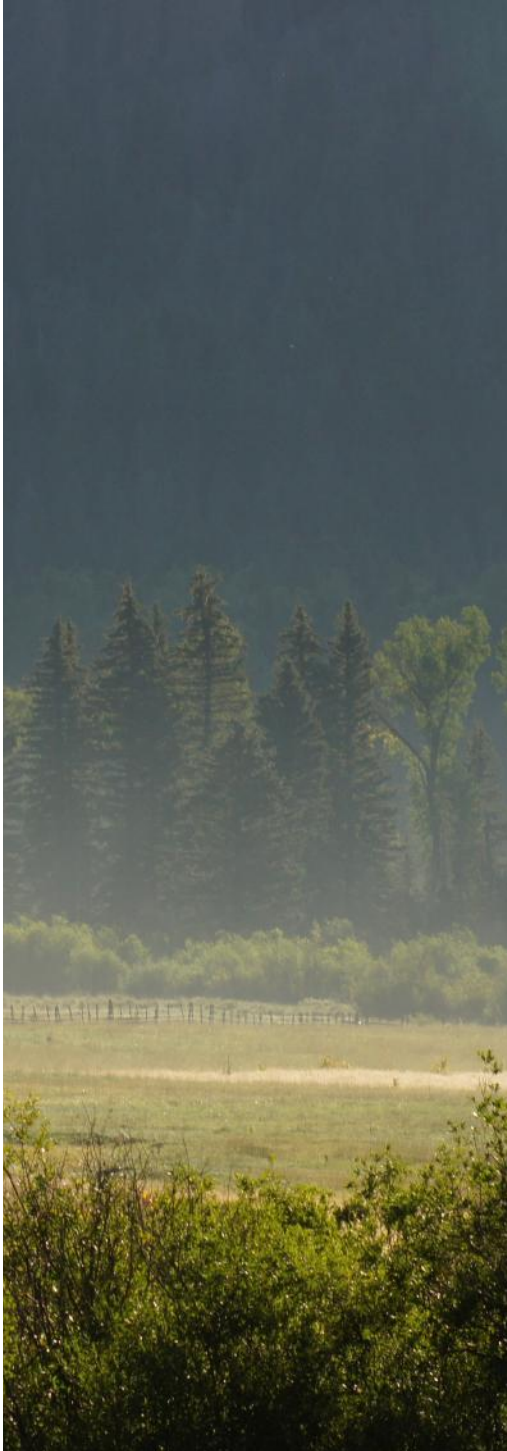
Journey returned to the Rogue River watershed in the southern Cascade Range east of Medford, Oregon with a mate. In early 2015, officials named the two adult wolves and their young ones the Rogue Pack, the first wolf family in western Oregon. There are twelve wolf families and a minimum of 110 wolves in Oregon as of December 2015. Seven wolves died in Oregon in 2015.

One wolf family has since been documented in California.





# The Return Of Our German Wolves



This is my favorite part and brings us back to the beginning of the book. As you remember, as a child, I always wanted the wolves to return to my home country, Germany. Back then, there were no wolves left. There were markers in the forest that read something like “Last wolf killed in 1872”, “Last wolf in the area killed in 1750” and so on. It was quite discouraging. Then, something amazing happened! I was already living in the United States to be close to wild animals and wilderness when the first wolves crossed back into Germany from Poland. This time they were allowed free passage and made it all the way into Germany. The people who were working for the equivalent of the German Forest Service kept quiet about their return and waited to see what would happen. They did not kill them or tell many people about them which would surely have caused their early demise. They simply waited ...

The time had come that I had always dreamed about as a girl. The wolves were returning to the place where they belonged! The first wolf came in 1996 and the first wolf family was formed by two wolf parents in 2000. Since then, lots has happened! By 2006, ten years later, there were three families that had at least 18 puppies altogether that years.

Now, in 2016 there are about 150 wolves in Germany who live in 26 families. There even is a marker in the forest now that says “Return of the wolves”.

I finally got one of my deepest wishes fulfilled! The German wolves have made their comeback and even though things are not ideal for them (some people in Germany still believe in the ‘big, bad wolf’ and there have been incidents of wolves getting poached) the wolves, are expanding their territory and there has even been a wolf sighting not too far from where I grew up. Please keep your fingers crossed that one day there will be a wolf family that lives near my home town.

**Which brings me to a very important point:**

I have seen wolves in Alaska, Arizona, Germany, Montana, New Mexico and Wyoming. Never has there even been the slightest sense of danger in me when I have come in contact with a wolf. On the contrary, a deep sense of awe and wonder has been the prevailing feeling. I have felt deep gratitude for this gift of a wolf sighting, because there are not that many wolves left in the lower 48 states and in many places, people will never get to see a wolf in the wild. Wolves have something to fear from us, not the other way round.

Every time we met, the wolves have come to me. They are very curious creatures and look at a human with these wonderful, fearless, deep, yellow eyes. I would never intrude on them since I respect the animals as beings who are here on this earth with me and everybody else. I grant them the same rights as I would any other being: the right to privacy, to be undisturbed, free of stress and free to do what they need to do here on this planet. I never follow them, want anything from them and rather invite them to come see me if they feel so inclined. I know, this is a stance that is not too common, but I am meeting increasingly more people who feel the same way and who are dedicating their lives to the welfare of humans, animals and the earth.

Maybe this book inspires you to be one of them?



# Wolves and Humans



- Do you have any idea why European settlers did not like the Wolf?
- Why was their relationship to the Wolf different from that of the Native People?
- What stories about wolves do you know?
- How are they different from the story "The people who love wolves"?
- What can we do now, in the 21st century, to coexist with wolves?
- Why would we want them to stay on this earth with us?
- What is their role in the ecosystem?
- How do they influence other species of animals?
- What other animal is a descendent of the wolves and lives with us humans?
- What would you do when you see a wolf?
- Are you afraid of wolves? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- Do you know anybody in your family who is afraid of wolves?
- Who has ever seen a wolf in the wild?
- What was it like to see a wolf in the wild?
- What is the difference between a human killing and eating a cow and a wolf doing the same? Is there a difference?
- What is your own standpoint on coexistence between wild animals, livestock and humans?
- What can your contribution to coexistence look like?





# Something Fun To Do & Find Out

Wolves are a keystone species. Please look up that term and explain why!

Please look up the term “Trophic Cascades.” What is it and how do wolves fit into that term?

Talk to one person about wolves today and tell them something about them that they did not know before.

Do some research on how to coexist with wolves in modern times.

Is there an animal where you live that is in danger of becoming extinct? If yes: Can you do anything about it?

How can humans change and evolve their relationship with wild animals for our mutual benefit and thriving?

# Quiz

**1. Mexican Gray Wolves are:**

- a) carnivores
- b) omnivores
- c) herbivores
- d) none of the above

**2. They weigh about:**

- a) 100 pounds
- b) 200 pounds
- c) 40 pounds
- d) 75 pounds

**3. They live in:**

- a) herds
- b) flocks
- c) families
- d) pods

**4. Mexican Gray Wolves live in:**

- a) the city
- b) forests and grasslands
- c) parks and zoos
- d) none of the above

**5. Wolves howl to:**

- a) communicate with each other
- b) say hi to the moon
- c) exercise their vocal cords
- d) warn deer and elk

**6. Wolves are important because they:**

- a) are pretty
- b) keep the herds of deer and elk strong
- c) can howl
- d) eat grass

**7. Mexican Wolves are:**

- a) gray
- b) rust
- c) black and buff
- d) all of the above

**8. How many Mexican Wolves are there currently in the wild:**

- a) 100
- b) 300
- c) 80
- d) none

**9. Mexican Wolves carry food home for their pups in their:**

- a) mouths
- b) paws
- c) stomachs
- d) none of the above

**10. Mexican wolves are the:**

- a) prettiest wolves
- b) most endangered wolves
- c) fastest wolves
- d) best wolves

**11. Mexican wolves:**

- a) eat deer
- b) eat elk
- c) eat rodents
- d) all of the above

Key: 1a, 2d, 3c, 4b, 5a, 6b, 7d, 8a, 9c, 10b, 11d