

End the wolf hunt – save the wolves



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Saving the Grey Wolves Wolves and humans have been coexisting for hundreds of years. Before Europeans conquered our vast country, wolves held a very esteemed place in Native American culture, as they were vital to forest ecosystems, and were often believed to be spiritual beings in many tribes (kids planet 1). As much as they were honored in tribal cultures, others feared them. Children's fables often described them as "the big bad wolf" in stories such as Little Red Riding hood and The Three Little Pigs (kids planet 1). Settlers saw wolves in this way because they were a sort of competition, dwindling stock, and wild game numbers (kids planet 1). Even into the 20th century, the belief that wolves were still a threat to human safety continued despite documentation to the contrary, and by the 1970s, the lower forty-eight states had wolf populations less than three percent of their historical range, about 500 to 1, 000 wolves (kids planet 1).

In a book written by Bruce Hampton called The Great American Wolf, he states, " In the p of three hundred years nationwide, but only seventy years in the West, hunters in the United States had managed to kill off the wild prey of gray wolves; settlers, farmers, and ranchers had occupied most of the wolves' former habitat; Wolfers had poisoned them; bounty hunters had dynamited their dens and pursued them with dogs, traps, and more poison; and finally, the government had stepped in and, primarily at the livestock industry's behest, quite literally finished them off. Fortunately, around this time in the '70s, American's were starting to become much more aware of their impact on the environment and the wildlife. The Endangered Species Act was created in 1973, and the Grey Wolf was put on the list in 1974. After almost 35 years of restoration efforts and conservation work, the Grey Wolf

has finally been taken off the endangered species list in Minnesota, with about 1,700 hundred wolves in the state (kids planet 1). Less than a year later, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) passed a law allowing a certain number of wolves to be hunted starting November 3, 2012 (kids planet 1).

In the month and a half, the season has been open, about 150 Grey wolves have been killed. Grey wolves are a vital part of our ecosystems and perhaps eventually grey wolves will once again thrive well enough that hunting them will not result in more conflict, but it is too soon to start the hunt again. Hunters should not be allowed to hunt grey wolves in Minnesota, because they have not had enough time to replenish their population and wolves are not a threat to human safety at all. Normally when an animal is taken off the endangered species list, it is given a five-year grace period to try and regain its spot back in the ecosystem before declaring a hunting season is even a thought in the minds of DNR decision-makers (Horon 1). Since it took close to 40 years for the Grey wolf to be taken off the list, it seems logical to give the animal an even longer period to recover, to ensure that the animal does not get put on the list ever again.

Though one hunt most likely will not kill off all the wolves, if hunting continues every year, there could be serious damage once again to the wolf population, as said in an article from a Wisconsin news website, madison.com. "One hunt won't put wolves... back on the list but research hints at possible longer-term harm to the wolf population and even an increase in wolves killing livestock, researchers say" (Seely 1). However, the Minnesota DNR ruled that less than one year was a sufficient amount of time for the

wolves to repopulate, and opened a wolf-hunting season on November 3rd, 2012. Before settlers came to North America, more than 250, 000 wolves roamed the uncharted territory that is now the United States (Cosmos magazine). With every year of citizen growth in the New World, the Wolf population decreased. As the U. S. grew and became more populated, settlers practically made careers out of wolf hunting. In the 19th century, the pelts were in such high demand that almost everyone sought to kill as many wolves as possible (kids planet 1). People moving west bought hundreds of acres of land to raise their stock on and killed every wolf that came near.

Research from 1974 showed that there were only about 500 Grey wolves living in the entire United States (kids planet 1). In efforts to re-grow the wolf population, conservationists took wolves into protection. Being protected by the Endangered Species Act has helped the Grey Wolf a lot. In the Great Lakes, wolves have grown in population and expanded their range from Minnesota to Northern Michigan and Wisconsin (Meador 1). Although there have been huge gains in favor of the wolves, population recovery is far from over. Only 5, 000 to 6, 000 wolves occupy a mere five percent of the animals' historical range throughout Minnesota and the rest of the United States (Meador 1). Replenishing wolf populations throughout the states would protect the future of wolves and allow them to play their important role in the forest environment in greater fulfillment of their former range. Yet another reason why wolves should not be hunted is that they pose no actual threat to humans or livestock. Wolves are able to kill animals much larger than humans and should be treated with respect.

Contrary to the belief that wolves are vicious and aggressive towards humans, there have only been two reported deaths by wolf attack since 1900, one of which is heavily disputed (OregonWild 1). Moreover, wolves are opportunists and sometimes eat livestock. However, they have a relatively small impact on the livestock industry as a whole (OregonWild 1). Unstable meat prices, disease, fuel and land prices, weather, dogs, and even human thieves pose larger threats to the market. (OregonWild 1). It is simply not true when people in favor of the wolf hunt say that wolves are detrimental to the industry. The United States livestock industry has been in a slow decline, preceding wolf recovery by many decades; However, a study done in an area of Oregon with a high wolf population showed that from 2009 to 2011, while the wolf population grew from 500 to 1400, revenue in the livestock industry jumped almost fifty percent to almost \$27 million in a county with barely 7,000 citizens (OregonWild). Although wolves were not the cause of the huge increase, it is clear that their impact in the industry is small (OregonWild). Like shark attacks, when wolves wreak havoc, it can make for upsetting photos and grim stories, and so the risk of wolves to livestock is many times magnified (OregonWild 1). Research done in areas of high wolf populations has actually shown that having wolves around may actually decrease livestock loss by keeping smaller predators like coyotes in check (OregonWild 1). Of course, there are many people who believe that a Wolf hunt is completely acceptable under current circumstances. Many supporters believe that if professionals are not actively watching the wolf population, it will increase much too rapidly (Robb 1).

Bob Robb, a hunting column writer, says, “ This is especially true in areas where there are lots of animals for them to eat – like the Yellowstone ecosystem. Because wolf numbers exceeded targeted reintroduction population goals in the Yellowstone ecosystem more rapidly than expected, the animal was removed from the Endangered Species List and a sport hunting season on wolves was instituted in 2009” (Robb 1). Research does show that wolf packs not observed by researchers do reproduce more (petersenhunting 1). Minnesotans should not be allowed to hunt wolves because they have only been off the endangered species list for a year so their populations are not at the greatest numbers, and statistics from states where wolf hunting is illegal to show that they may actually help the livestock industry and are not a threat at all. Very recently, researchers at Yellowstone National Park were saddened when the Alpha Female, called 832F by scientists and “ Rockstar” by visitors, was found dead outside park boundaries on December sixth. Seven other wolves were found dead with her, all killed by hunters (EarthIslandJournal 1). After environmentalist’s work getting the Grey Wolf on the list finally paid off, they had hopes for the wolves to once again thrive someday in their natural habitat. This will never happen if we start diminishing wolf populations, right when they are at the height of restoration progress.

Reference

1. <http://www.owlingforwolves.org/news/dnr-what-happened-behind-closed-doors/>; “ COSMOS Magazine. ” Grey Wolf Withdrawn from Endangered List. N. p. , 05 May 2010. Web. 13 Nov. 2012.

2. <http://www.cosmosmagazine.com/news/2729/grey-wolf-withdrawn-us-endangered-list?page=0,009>>. Greder, Andy. "Minnesota Wolf Hunt: About 150 Wolves Killed Statewide". TwinCities.com. N. p. , 18 Nov. 2012.
3. Web. 10 Dec. 2012. Heron, Sonia. "The Grey: A Bad Fairy Tale About Wolves." Globalanimal.com. Global Animal Website, 27 Jan. 2012.