



# Grey Wolf

## *Canis lupus*

In Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve

### General information

Originally distributed province-wide, current wolf range in the province of Saskatchewan doesn't extend much past the parkland region. Wolves are most common in the forested parts of Saskatchewan, especially where there is little human activity to interfere with them. They are well adapted to a wide range of habitats from grasslands to meadows to aspen parkland and boreal forest, wherever large prey animals are found. Wolves have been seen mostly in the northern regions of Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve. A wolf pack's territory can range from 15 to 150 square kilometres.

There can be as many as twenty wolves in a pack, led by a dominant (alpha) male and female. Litters are approximately six pups, which are born in May and are nearly full-grown by late September. However, most die within the first year of life from sickness, injury or starvation. Those who reach adulthood tend to live long lives and typically die of old age (inability to hunt successfully).

Wolves usually hunt and kill other animals for food, but will also scavenge on the dead. They are well adapted to killing large mammals such as deer, elk, moose and caribou as a pack. Hunting solo, they target the young of large herbivores, and other small game including beaver, hares, waterfowl, grouse, lynx, fish and mice. Hunting patterns are influenced by the characteristics and environmental conditions of the habitat, concentration and distribution of prey, physical vulnerability and defensive behaviour of the prey. Decreasing habitat is a leading cause for increased risk of wolf-livestock conflict, hunting kills, and road mortality.

### Legislation

Wolves are classified as a furbearer species in Saskatchewan, which means they can be trapped legally with a trapper's licence. They are protected under the provincial Wildlife Act, which requires a special permit to kill wolves that are causing livestock or property damage.

Livestock producers can request the assistance of a predator control specialist by contacting:

**Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board:  
1-877-299-6999.**

**Or SCIC toll free: 1-888-935-0000.**

### What should I do if I see a wolf?

(Information taken from the Ministry of Environment's  
Wolves in Saskatchewan brochure)

Wolf attacks on humans are extremely rare. Habituated wolves associate the presence and scent of humans with food. They will still hunt natural food sources, but will take increased risks and allow themselves to be seen in broad daylight. Monitor the situation and only call the Ministry of Environment conservation officers if the animal becomes a problem. Report any unusually bold or aggressive behaviour.

**North Battleford Ministry of Environment and  
Resource Management (SERM) office:  
(306) 446 -7416**

### *Behavioural signs*

A wolf that is habituated may 'test' people by moving about to observe from different locations, approaching people. However, unattended pups may approach people purely out of curiosity. A wolf with ears forward and tail hanging straight down is very aware and may be trying to 'read' the situation better.

Barking is a sign of alarm, but it may also be protecting something. If it runs off, it is not a threat. A frightened or nervous wolf will swivel its ears to the side and tuck its tail between its legs. Flattened ears and lips drawn into a snarl is displaying discomfort or aggression.

#### *If a wolf approaches you*

- Do not run or turn your back on it and do not approach or chase it.
- Face the wolf, stand tall, raise your arms to increase your stature and keep your eyes on it. Wolves, like dogs, do not like to be stared at. This will help to discourage a possible encounter. Look for an open area if necessary, and move to it. Wolves like to use concealment to approach.
- Where more than one wolf is involved in an encounter, the person should decide which wolf is the dominant risk-taker and focus attention and response mainly on that wolf. The others will take signals from that wolf. In these cases it is better to have protection for your back in the form of a tree or some other large obstacle.
- If you encounter a wolf and your dog is present, bring your dog in close and restrain it if possible. This will prevent the dog from potentially falling victim to a wolf attack. It is very likely that the wolf has been attracted by your dog and will be less likely to approach closer when the two of you are together.
- Making noise will further discourage a wolf.
- If a wolf attacks, fight back aggressively.

#### *Best practices*

- Stay away from known den or kill sites and areas where wolves have frequently been seen or have become habituated to humans.
- Be observant; watch for fresh tracks and droppings. Listen for howling. Avoid travel through such areas at night and travel in pairs or groups where an encounter might be likely.
- Make frequent noise to warn wolves of your presence. This will give them time to move away.
- Keep all locations of permanent or temporary human occupancy free of accessible garbage. This includes campsites and picnic areas. Allowing wolves to become habituated to people by giving them access to garbage lessens their ability to survive without garbage, increases the chance of a threatening encounter with a human, increases their chances of having to be killed by people and contributes to unnaturally high populations of wolves in areas where their natural prey could not support them.

- Keep your campsite clean. Cook and store food away from sleeping areas.
- Dogs may attract wolves and instigate aggressive behaviour. Keep dogs on a leash when hiking or walking in areas where wolves may be present.
- Never feed wolves or try to attract them for a better view. A wolf is a large predator and is capable of taking down prey much larger than a human. Wolves must be treated with respect.

#### *Protecting Your Livestock*

- Changes in grazing patterns and herd temperament may suggest wolves or other predators are in the area.
- Young livestock are more vulnerable to attack, so producers need to be especially vigilant in the spring.
- Keeping livestock confined in pens or corrals at night will help to prevent predator attacks.
- Guard dogs may help protect against wolves. Select larger breeds and use more than one dog.
- If you suspect livestock has been attacked or killed by wolves or other predators, preserve the scene and call a conservation officer. Do not move a carcass until a conservation officer has investigated. Once an investigation is complete, bury the carcass to prevent scavenging.

#### **Sources**

- Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment. No date. Wolves in Saskatchewan. Brochure.
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment. 2012. Saskatchewan Fur Program: Summary of Regulations, Policy and Associated Programs. Province of Saskatchewan. Queen's Printer.
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment. 2008. Saskatchewan Game Report 2007-08. Province of Saskatchewan. Queen's Printer.
- Urton, E.J.M. 2004. Population genetics, foraging ecology, and trophic relationships of grey wolves in central Saskatchewan. MSc thesis. Department of Biology, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. 87 pages.