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Key to Identifying:

The Grey Wolf prefer the open tundra and forests of British Columbia. They once inhabit most of North America, but now they mostly occur only in Alaska, Canada and parts of U.S.A

Biology:

Grey Wolves are the largest wild member of the dog family.

Generally, the Grey Wolf has a grizzled grey fur, but actually the colour can vary from white to black. It always depends on the area where they appear and how they are best suited to a particular environment to survive.

The Wolf's ears are straight and its black tipped tail is bushy and has a length between one and two feet. Male Wolves are larger than females, average is a body length between three and five feet, and weigh between 50 and 130 pounds.

Behaviour:

Wolves are social and territorial animals. They mate for life and live in packs of two to 30 animals, but very common are packs consisting of a family group of eight to twelve wolves. Within a pack there is the alpha pair and their offspring which form a tightly knit, organized group.

The strongest male is usually the pack leader, but all members of the pack care for the young in order to unite the pack. Each pack occupies an area and defends it against intruders. When nearby packs cross into each others territory, fights often result in death of pack members. When subordinate wolves in the hierachy are forced out of the packs, the lone wolf may find mates and with those he searches for unoccupied areas where they can establish a new pack

Breeding time varies with the latitude, but mostly occurs in March and April. After a pregnancy period of about nine weeks, litters of two to ten (average is seven) pups are born, usually in a den. The pack normally remains at the birthing den for a month or more.

Grey Wolves are carnivores and their main prey are large mammals. When Wolves hunt as a pack, Grey Wolves mainly hunt deer, moose, caribou, elk, bison and muskox. Grey Wolves usually hunt at night by chasing down their prey either slashing tendons or driving it back to waiting pack members. If they hunt alone they take smaller mammals such as beavers, rabbits or rodents. However their prey depends on their geographic location.

Within a pack, Wolves communicate with each other by crouching, rolling over, chin touching or

howling. Wolves often howl spontaneously at a place where the pack meets. Wolves apparently enjoy this kind of shared howling. Howling by a pack can also be a way of warning other packs to stay away from occupied territory or can serve to separate packs.

Management

The Wolf's only important predator is a man and particularly human fear, superstition and outright hatred of the Wolf decreased its population drastically to 50% of its former range.

Wolves have already been exterminated in many different places, but there may be less danger of such excesses in the future due to much greater awareness among humans.

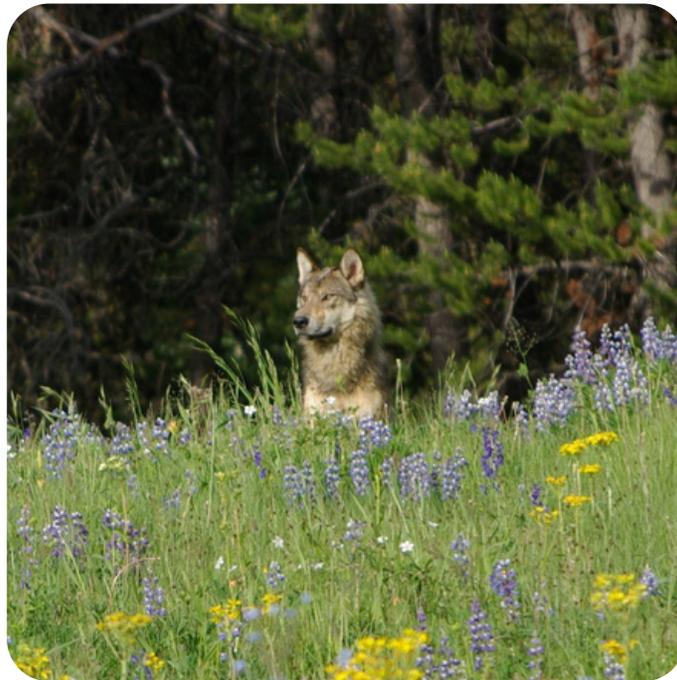


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