

Welcome the Wolf Back Home

by Kristin DeBoer

Over the last decade, a wolf recovery movement has swept the nation. The successful re-establishment of wolves into Yellowstone and Central Idaho has inspired wildlife lovers everywhere. Thousands of people visit the Great Lakes just to experience the thrill of wildness which wolves bring to the forest.

For thousands of years, the eastern timber wolf lived throughout the forests of the Northeast, including Maine. But in the 1600s, colonists began to clear the land for agriculture. In the process wolves were cleared out too. Whole packs were shot, trapped, poisoned, and burned, until the last wolf was driven from the region by the turn of the century.

In the last hundred years, the forests have been re-greening old pastures. Moose, deer, and beaver, once scarce, are recovering. As the land has become more wild, our ideas about wolves have changed too. Several public opinion polls have shown that the majority of citizens believe that the wolf has a right to exist in this region.

Yet, as the wolf recovery movement builds momentum, there are bound to be detractors. Already opponents in New Hampshire passed a law prohibiting wolf reintroduction. Now wolf-opponents are trying to do the same in Vermont. Maine could be next. Some people fear that wolves will attack their children, prey upon livestock, and decimate deer herds. Others fear that laws protecting wolves will "lock up the forest" and mean lost logging jobs. Regrettably, myths of the "big bad wolf" still persist.

The truth is that there is not one good reason to fear the wolf. Experiences with wolf recovery in other parts of the country show that wolves do not pose any significant threat to people's livelihoods, pastimes, or safety. In fact, wolf recovery can benefit local economies by attracting ecotourism, and increase the health of prey populations, such as deer.

This year will be a critical time for all those concerned about the ecological health of the North Woods to take up the call for the wolf. The land is ready for the wolf's return, ready to reweave one more strand in the ecosystem that is the revival of this region's biodiversity. But this will only happen if the people of this region choose to welcome the wolf home.

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North America's Most Dangerous Mammal (take a guess before you read the article)

By Ronald Bailey

What is North America's most dangerous (non-human) mammal? Grizzly bears? Certainly Lewis and Clark on their way to the Pacific Ocean in 1804 thought so. In the early 1800s, some 50,000 grizzlies roamed the western United States, but their population has now dropped to around 1,000 in the lower 48 states. Bears, grizzly and black, killed 128 people in North America in the 20th century. What about mountain lions? Reports that mountain lions lurk in the hills and pick off women trail bikers certainly chill the blood. There have been 14 deaths in North America as a result of mountain lion attacks in the 20th century. (In contrast wild gray wolves have not been documented to kill a even one human in North America during at least the last 150 years.- Ed added this)

No, there is another creature roaming America's woods that is far more dangerous than these big predators. The most dangerous mammal in North America is...Bambi. The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that white-tailed deer kill around 130 Americans each year simply by causing car accidents. In 1994, these predator deer had a banner year, causing 211 human deaths in car wrecks. (In addition, deer in North America annually kill up to a dozen people by goring or kicking them.- Ed added this)

Extract from:

Wolf Education and Research Center
www.wolfcenter.org/pack/idahowolf.htm