

These extracts are from a transcription of programme about Wolves

Stone Age people took wolf pups and tamed them, and all our domesticated dogs are descended from them.

Wolves can cover 50 miles in 24 hours, and do so for day after day after day.

Wolves operate as a pack.

Younger wolves learn from the older, more experienced ones

As farmers cleared the forests, the wolves developed a taste for livestock. So, wolves were hunted without mercy. Eventually, they were driven out of most of Europe's forests, but an irrational fear of them has remained.

Wolves are wary and elusive

It is old, young, or sick deer that are most likely to be killed by wolves. A fit deer, with all its senses tuned to danger, can usually spot a wolf in time, and escape.

Wolves follow and attempt to kill the formidable and massive of all prey animals -- buffalo.

Some wolves weigh over 125 pounds -- an adult buffalo may weigh over a ton. So, bringing one down is both difficult and dangerous.

To make up for their relatively small size, these wolves rely heavily on teamwork. They move among the buffalo, sizing up the herd, looking for an animal that might be vulnerable, and therefore easier to bring down. If the pack can persuade the herd to move, then the older and weaker animals will become more obvious. The wolves choose their moment very carefully, because in each buffalo hunt, they risk their lives.

Wolves were shot, trapped, and poisoned with fanatical zeal. By the early 1930s, wolves had been exterminated from most of the United States. As in Europe, the wolf became a fugitive

At three months, Wolf pups are still too inexperienced to kill large animals, so they are nurtured in a safe place while the older wolves go out hunting. Grovelling and urgent licking by the pups encourages the returning adult to regurgitate the contents of its expandable stomach.

In the United States, some people, increasingly appreciative of wild places, have campaigned for the protection of wolves and a better understanding of their nature. Many people want to re-introduce them into protected land, which is now overrun by deer and elk. The Nez Perce Indians of the Rocky Mountains offered their own tribal lands for the release of 35 wild-trapped wolves.

HORACE: When the first wolves came back for release, I was there to greet them. And it was good to give them a blessing. I had the opportunity to look inside the cage and greet the wolf. I looked into his eyes and he looked at me. And I spoke to him in my own language. I told him, "I'm glad to see you back, my brother. You have been gone a long time, and it's good to see you back here again."

But wolves have legal protection now. Killing them no longer brings a bounty, but a possible hundred-thousand-dollar fine. Ranching country is hard to police. Within weeks, the female wolf's radio collar was recovered. It had been cut off and dumped. Neither her body -- nor the culprit --was ever found. Soon afterwards, her mate, the grey male, was found dead by the highway.

But when shepherds lose occasional lambs, it's the wolf that is usually blamed.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/transcripts/2415wolves.html