

Wolves Killing Oregon Elk

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The weekend finally rolled around, northeast Oregon residents Justin and Jenna couldn't wait to get out and take some wildlife photos with their new camera lens. The weather didn't look too promising in Union County so they decided to drive 80 miles east to the Zumwalt Prairie located between Joseph and Imnaha in Northeast Oregon.

Justin recalls "We've gone to this area numerous times to see the wildlife, we would see herds of 300-400 elk and deer, and many would be only 100 yards or so from the vehicle. Although, I have to say on the last trip the animals did appear more alert, we still expected to see something, so we decided to go for a hike and explore the area more thoroughly."



After hiking for about 15 minutes Justin and Jenna came across huge tracks in the muddy trail. Justin relates, "There was no mistaking it; we both knew we were looking at wolf prints. We had heard wolf reports from local farmers but still couldn't believe we were actually looking at fresh wolf prints. Then we began to wonder, is this why there were no elk in sight? Does this explain why the elk and deer were all so skittish last month?"

Justin and Jenna continued down the trail thinking about what they had just seen. Justin explains, "The farther we walked the more wolf tracks we saw. Then right in front of us a group of magpies and a golden eagle flew off of a fresh elk kill. It was a calf elk and all that remained was the hide and some bones with small amounts of meat. About 20 yards away laid the head of the calf elk. We were still investigating the remains when suddenly we noticed three grey wolves bedded in a



rock pile only 70 yards up the ridge ahead of us. I knew this could be a once in a lifetime opportunity and I hoped they wouldn't catch our scent and take off. I immediately began snapping lots of photos. The wolves remained surprisingly calm; one at a time they casually got up and then just stared at us for several minutes. One wolf finally relieved herself and another took a big stretch, then the farthest wolf began to slowly walk away. The two closer wolves gazed at us a moment longer, then one at a time they turned and slowly followed, none of them looked back or indicated too much concern about our presence. But then again, why do they have to be concerned, they have no enemies."

Justin added, "After seeing the lack of elk and deer on this historic winter range, I'm very concerned about how these wolves are impacting the elk and deer herds. The wolf groups and the courts have stopped wolf management in other states; we can only hope we will be allowed to control these wolves soon, they are rapidly expanding throughout the Pacific Northwest. I'm also concerned about the effect wolves are going to have on our way of life, it was very clear as my photos show, these wolves had little or no fear of humans at close range in the broad daylight."

Justin and Jenna both enjoy their time in the outdoors and like photographing the local wildlife, they reside in Northeast Oregon. Justin asked for this story to be shared with the public. Feel free to pass this on to your email lists and anyone in the media.

