

Wolves in Wisconsin



Western Great Lakes Wolf Range

Wolves have made a remarkable recovery in Wisconsin and the neighboring states of Minnesota, and Michigan. Wolves flourished in Wisconsin prior to European settlement. In 1865, however, Wisconsin instituted a wolf bounty. The last Wisconsin wolves were killed in 1958 and 1959 just after the state removed the wolf from the bounty.

Wolves returned naturally to Wisconsin by migrating from Minnesota's expanding wolf population. By 2003, wolves were distributed across much of the heavily forested portions of northern Wisconsin, and a small population occurred in the dense forests of the west-central parts of the state.

CURRENT WOLF NUMBERS IN WISCONSIN

The late winter count in 2003, before pups were born, was a population of over 335 wolves across the state.

- About 45 wolves occur west of Wisconsin Rapids in the central forest of Wisconsin.
- About 290 wolves occur in northern Wisconsin.

Wolf Conflicts with Dogs

As with other wild canids, wolves are very territorial. Wolves guard their territories from other wolves, coyotes, and domestic dogs.

Wolves are probably most aggressive toward strange wolves and dogs when wolf pups are small at den and rendezvous sites, during the breeding season in January and February, and when they are protecting a fresh kill.

ARE MY HUNTING DOGS AT RISK?

- Hound dogs used for hunting bear, coyotes, bobcat, and raccoons, are perhaps at greatest risk of being attacked by wolves.
- Dogs used for bird hunting are less likely to be attacked.
- Wolves normally avoid people and are less likely to approach dogs that are in visual or auditory range of humans.
- Hounds often hunt some distance from hunters, and their baying sound may also present a challenge to the territorial wolves.
- The highest risk of wolf attacks on dogs seems to occur in July through September, and a moderately high risk occurs in December.
- These periods signal the summer rendezvous period, and the approach of the winter breeding season.

Wolf Facts

- Wolf pack territories normally occur in heavily forested areas, with low density of roads, large expanses of wetlands, and mostly public or industrial forest lands.
- Wolves normally occur in territories of 20 to 100 square miles. In late winter the average pack consists of about 4 wolves, but can range from 2 to 12.
- Wolves breed in February and pups are born in dens in April. The average litter is 5-6 pups. Pups remain in and near their den sites, for two months while they are being nursed by their mother.
- By mid or late June, pups are weaned and big enough to be outside the den throughout the day. At this time the adults move pups to the summer rendezvous sites.
- Most wolf packs use only one or two dens each season, but may use 2 to 10 different rendezvous sites. The rendezvous sites are used by wolves until late September or early October when the pups are big enough to keep up to the adults on their hunting forays.



Tracy Brooks, Mission Wolf/USFWS

CONTACTS FOR REPORTING WOLF ATTACKS ON DOMESTIC ANIMALS:

Northern Wisconsin:

USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services
PO Box 1064, Rhinelander, WI 54501
(800) 228-1368 or (715) 369-5221

Southern and Central Wisconsin:

USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services
W7231 Hwy. 49, Waupun, WI 53963
(800) 433-0663 or (920) 324-4514

Information on the Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association:

Rick Posig, 6887 County Rd. E.
Abrams, WI 54101-9623
(920) 826-7584

CONTACTS

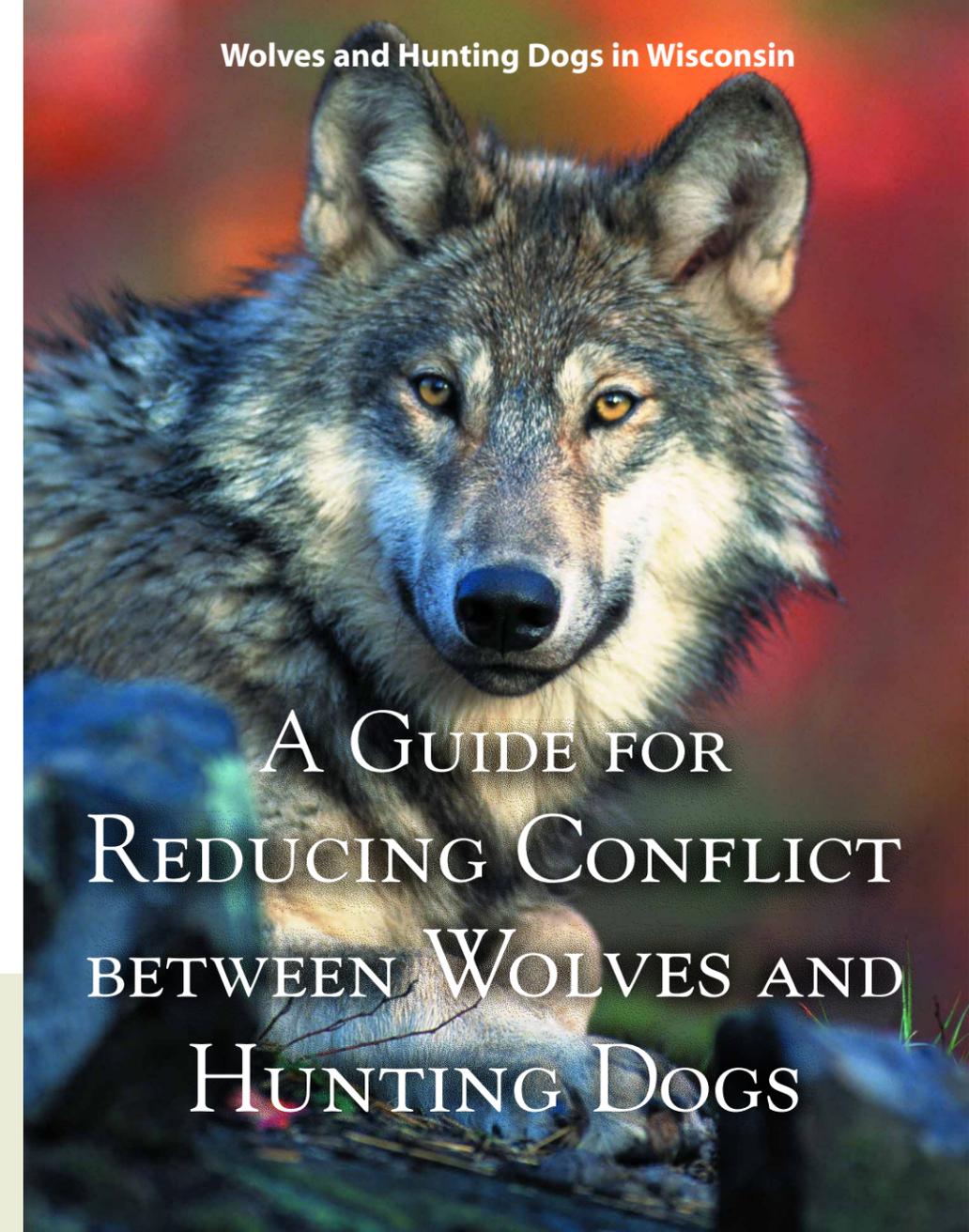
Information on the Wisconsin Wolf Program and Compensation Payments:

Adrian Wydeven, WDNR
875 S. 4th Ave., Park Falls, WI 54552
(715) 762-4684 ext. 107 or
Randy Jurewicz, WDNR
PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53703
(608) 267-7507
www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/mammals/wolf/

Information on Wolf Education Programs:

Lisa Yee-Litzenberg, National Wildlife Federation
213 W. Liberty, Suite 200, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 769-3351 www.nwf.org/wolves
Ruth Ann Lee, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
720 St. Croix St., Suite 101, Prescott, WI 54021
(715) 282-9279 www.wiuf.org
Pam Troxell, Timber Wolf Alliance, SOEI
Northland College, Ashland, WI 54806
(715) 682-1490
www.northland.edu/soei/timber_wolf.html

Wolves and Hunting Dogs in Wisconsin



A GUIDE FOR REDUCING CONFLICT BETWEEN WOLVES AND HUNTING DOGS

Gary Kramer, USFWS

Provided by



NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION®
www.nwf.org

and

WISCONSIN WILDLIFE FEDERATION
USDA-APHIS-WILDLIFE SERVICES
WISCONSIN BEAR HUNTERS ASSOCIATION
TIMBER WOLF ALLIANCE

Identifying Wolf Sign

FOOT FALLS

Wolves and coyotes generally use direct registration when they walk (hind foot steps in line with front foot). Most dogs do not.



TRAVEL

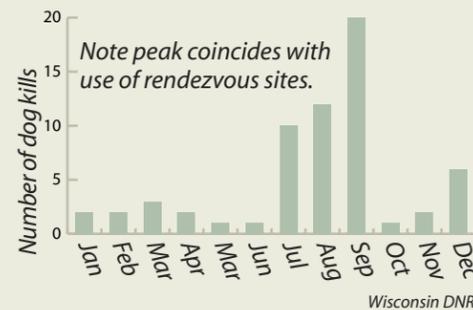
Wolves and coyotes mostly travel by walking and trotting, and usually in fairly straight lines. Dog travel is more variable using a lot of gallops and bounds and often weaving about.



SCAT

- Wolf scats are usually fairly distinct. The scats are cylindrical with tapered fringes of hair. Most scats are full of deer, beaver or sometimes snowshoe hare hair. The scats are usually over 1" in diameter and maybe as wide as 1 1/2", and 4 to 7" long.
- Coyote scats are usually less than 1" in diameter, and often full of small mammal hair.
- Dog scats can be distinguished because of lack of hair in the scat, lack of tapered fringe, and being full of cereal matter.
- Bear scats usually have a lot more plant material, even if the bear ate a fawn.

Average Number of Dogs Killed by Wolves by Month 1986–2002



RENDEZVOUS SITES

- A wolf rendezvous site is a resting site where pups are left for periods of several days while the adults hunt.
- Wolves begin to use rendezvous sites in mid or late June and abandon them in late September or in October when pups become strong enough to keep up with the pack.
- Wolf rendezvous sites can be determined by high presence of wolf tracks, large and small.
- There is a high occurrence of wolf scats, and sometimes bone remains of wolf kills.
- The rendezvous sites are often at grassy openings, with open water nearby, and dense cover of conifers or alders at the edge of the opening.
- The grassy area will have well worn trails and many bed sites in the grass.
- Some wolf packs will set up rendezvous sites next to bear bait stations.
- Rendezvous sites may also be determined if wolf pups are heard to howl from the area, especially at night.
- Sometimes pups may be observed during the daytime near rendezvous sites on logging roads or forest roads.

Reducing Conflict of Wolves with Dogs

One of the keys for minimizing wolf problems with dogs is to avoid areas with concentrated wolf use.



The best way for hunters to minimize conflict with wolves is to attempt to avoid them. Because wolves are so wide spread, however, total avoidance may not be possible. Although wolves do have large territories, they do concentrate a lot of activity in specific areas, such as the rendezvous sites.

- Prior to hunting a new area with hounds, hunters should determine if wolf depredations have occurred on dogs within the area in previous years. Wolf packs that have killed dogs in one year, are more likely to kill dogs the next year.
- Contact the local DNR wildlife biologist to determine areas where problems have occurred in recent years. See DNR contact information at the end of this publication.
- Place bells on your dogs to reduce risk of depredation by wolves. Only one dog with bells has been reported being attacked by wolves.
- Be familiar with your own dog's tracks, so that you can distinguish it from any wolf tracks.
- Move 2 or 3 miles from any rendezvous site, if possible, before releasing dogs.
- Avoid releasing dogs at baits recently visited by wolves. When looking for bear sign at a bait, make sure to also look for wolf tracks.
- If a specific bait site is receiving a lot of wolf use, discontinue using it until wolves have left, and concentrate on an alternative bait site.
- Attempt to stay as close to your dogs as possible. In large blocks of remote land, it may be good to have someone on the ground with the dogs as much as possible.
- Because wolves readily defend their kills, avoid releasing dogs near known deer kills, or vehicle killed deer that may be scavenged by wolves.

What if My Dog is Injured or Killed by Wolves?

- Contact USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services as soon as possible:

Northern Wisconsin:
(800) 228-1368 or (715) 369-5221

Southern and Central Wisconsin:
(800) 433-0663 or (920) 324-4514

Wildlife Services monitor phones 7 days a week. A wildlife specialist will be at the site for the investigation within 48 hours.

- Currently the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has funds to reimburse people for dogs killed by wolves. All depredations need to be verified by USDA Wildlife Services to be eligible for payments by the DNR. Such documentation will also be important for planning future wolf controls.
- It is important that wolf depredations on any dogs are carefully documented.
- If a wolf attacks a dog, leave some mark at the site such as flagging or item of clothing. If a dog is seriously injured, it should be taken to a vet as soon as possible.
- If the dog is dead, it would be best to leave it at the site and cover it with a tarp. If a hunter is uncomfortable leaving the carcass behind, leave some good marks to identify the site.
- Photographs or video of the depredated dogs and the depredation site may be useful in documenting the depredation.
- Care should be taken to avoid disturbing the depredation site, so that the wildlife specialist can readily read the sign.

More Wolf Facts

- Although wolves spend much of their lives as members of packs, most do spend some time as loners dispersing from their home territory, and attempting to join other packs or start up new packs on their own.
- Wolves normally disperse from their home pack when they are yearlings or two years old. At any one time, 5–15% of the population may be lone dispersing wolves.
- **Wolves are protected both by state and federal laws. Killing or injuring a wolf is against the law.**

