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On Wisconsin *Outdoors*



with the **Dick Ellis Experts**

■ **Wolf Hunt Meets Harvest Goals**

Are state population numbers far understated?

■ **Crying Wolf**

Foundation of truth imperative to management

■ **By the Numbers**

OWO sounds off on wolf management

■ **Casting Truth on the Wolf Issue**

Who supports a wolf population of 350 or less?

■ **November Wolf Hunt Halted**

Skyrocketing numbers now left unmanaged

■ **The Wolf Factor**

And the decline of Wisconsin deer hunting

■ **Logically Thinking**

The decline in northern deer hunting

■ **Far from Endangered**

A need to delist the wolf

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DICK ELLIS

Wolf Hunt Meets Harvest Goal

Are state population numbers far understated?

Wisconsin hunters took just three days to harvest 216 wolves during the February hunt, reinforcing the belief of thousands of Wisconsin sportsmen that the official stated population of 1195 wolves is significantly below the actual count. The harvest of 216 wolves is 8 percent over the harvest quota of 200 wolves unanimously voted for by the Natural Resources Board on February 15. Heading into the hunt, 119 wolves were allocated for state hunters with permit holders determined through an application/drawing process, and 81 wolves allocated to the Ojibwe Tribes in accordance with their treaty rights within the Ceded Territory.

“Putting the season together, we’re looking for a quota that will not result in a significant population change,” said DNR Wildlife Biologist Randy Johnson at a media briefing held Feb 25. “The population models are a big part of that and yet there is also always uncertainty.”

“There’s still a probability that a quota of 200 may reduce the population or it may allow the population to expand. At 216, we’re at a relatively small percentage over total quota. I would say there is low concern at a population level of any significant effect there.”

Following established precedent, the Ojibwe tribes elected not to contribute to harvest numbers despite claiming their allotted quota of 81 wolves. In Wisconsin’s three previous wolf hunts held in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15, the Ojibwe also claimed their allotment but did not participate in the hunt, contributing 0 wolves to each harvest total. Contacted directly by OWO, a spokesman for the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFW) said that approach remained consistent going into the 2021 hunt.

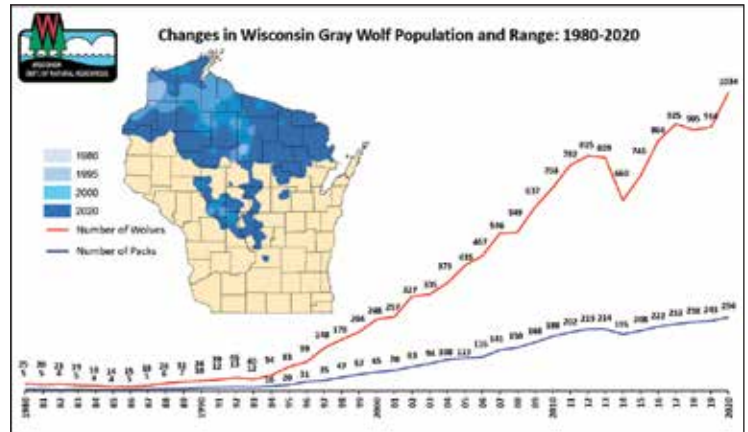
“As in previous wolf hunting and trapping seasons, Ojibwe tribes opted not to issue permits to individual tribal members,” said Charlie Otto Rasmussen for GLIFW. “For Ojibwe leaders and wildlife managers, the best use of tribal wolf quota declarations is to keep live animals, live wolves on the landscape, performing their important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems.”

“Statewide wolf hunting seasons are not an effective approach to addressing local livestock depredations. Hunting wolves is not necessary to protect humans. This past season is an example of poor wildlife management, made worse by the state’s inability to control the kill.”

On Wisconsin Outdoors’ Publishers respectfully disagree. A total harvest goal of 200, almost precisely hit, was the priority and should be the post-season focus. After four consecutive non-contributing harvest seasons by the Ojibwe, future management goals should acknowledge and accept that 0 will be a constant regardless of harvest allotment claims by the tribes. State harvest goals should be set higher accordingly; this after all is a game management issue.

From extensive personal field experience in the north country, years of discussion with trappers, avid hunters and wildlife experts, and ongoing scrutiny of Wisconsin wolf management, other related subjects need to be addressed. Problems include apparent inaccurate pack and overall population counts and proper correlating harvest goals; and wolf predation of whitetail deer particularly in the high wolf population territories of Wisconsin that have negatively affected both deer hunting participation and the overall economy.

A state recovery plan initiated in 1989 set a goal of reclassifying the wolf



The 1999 Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan, and 2006/2007 addendum, established a state management goal of 350 wolves. As the above graph shows, that goal was met in 2004. Since then, through a series of legal moves, proper management has been prevented allowing wolf numbers to skyrocket. As of this writing, and taking into account the 216 wolves taken during the 2021 hunt, Wisconsin’s wolf population is still 629 above the recommended Wisconsin Wolf Advisory Committee goal of 350. 1195 (Wisconsin DNR stated wolf population before the 2021 hunt) $- 216$ (Number of wolves taken during the 2021 hunt) $= 979$ (Present Wisconsin wolf population). 979 (Present Wisconsin wolf population) $- 350$ (Wisconsin Wolf Advisory Committee recommended goal) $= 629$ (Wisconsin wolves above the recommended goal).

from state endangered to threatened once the population remained at 80 or more wolves for three consecutive years. The 1999 Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan and plan addendum in 2006/07 delisted the wolf from state-threatened to a non-listed species when the population reached 250 and set a management goal of 350 animals outside of tribal reservation lands.

The real story following the 2021 harvest season is that the Wisconsin wolf population is approximately 630 animals over the recommended management goal if we accept the state pre-hunt population count of just under 1200 animals. Common sense, though, and the post-season harvest number of 216 wolves taken by Wisconsin hunters in just three days provide anecdotal evidence that the wolf population is probably much higher than 1200 animals. Expert trappers and hunters utilized and trusted as sources of expertise for decades by this outdoor columnist place the population conservatively at 2000 animals.

As efficient as the Wisconsin hunter is, hunters even using dogs would not be able to take more than 18 percent of the Wisconsin population in less than three days if 1200 accurately reflected real numbers, especially knowing that the wolf is a wary and elusive prey. They also point to population counts ignoring non-traditional wolf territory south of highway 64, and missing packs and lone animals both on southern terrain and in traditional count areas north. They provided OWO trail cam evidence as evidence

Many Wisconsin deer hunters believe the population is much higher based on increased sightings of wolves and sign, and decreased sighting and harvesting of deer in direct correlation. Many label the sighting of deer as rare or even non-existent.

“I have hunted northern Bayfield County for 58 years,” James M. Johannes emailed OWO February 28. “I know the area I hunt very well

and I have witnessed and understand the cyclical impact that winter, forestry, bear, coyote and bobcats have on the deer herd. There have, however, been two noteworthy changes over the years in the area I hunt. The first is pulping activity which has been extensive and should have been great for the deer herd. The second is the secular explosion of the wolf population which I know from trail cam pictures is at least twice the latest DNR estimate in our area.”

“The fact that it is nearly impossible to find a deer, or any sign of deer, in our heavily pulped area attests to the overwhelming impact the wolves have had on deer. What was once a quality hunting experience is now an exercise in futility. If this continues it will be nearly impossible to interest future generations of hunters in partaking in the once great tradition of quality big woods public deer hunting in Wisconsin.”

OWO Bear expert and columnist Mike Foss misses quality deer hunting in northern Wisconsin. He labels the decline in the deer hunting experience directly related to the increase in wolves, devastating. The conflict, he said, between those who make management decisions and the hunting public is coming to a head.

“It’s growing to a boiling point but it’s a good thing that it is moving toward that,” he said. “People need answers. They want truthful answers. And they deserve it. We’re losing our tradition of hunting in Wisconsin.”



A wolf pack that includes at least 9 animals is caught on trail camera in Northern Bayfield County October 19, 2020.

DICK ELLIS

Crying Wolf

Foundation of truth imperative to sound management

There is no room for crying wolf in wolf management.

Proper wolf management begins with establishing an accurate current population estimate, establishing a population goal, and establishing a harvest goal to reach the intended population number. Reaching the population goal through harvest is not at all about who harvests the animals, but it is imperative that all participating parties act in good faith.

Following established precedent, the Ojibwe tribes elected not to contribute to harvest numbers despite claiming their legally allotted quota of 81 wolves in the 2021 hunt recently concluded. As In Wisconsin’s three previous wolf hunts held in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15, the Ojibwe also claimed their allotment but did not participate in the hunt, contributing 0 wolves to each harvest total. Contacted directly by OWO, a spokesman for the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFW) said that approach remained consistent going into the 2021 hunt.

“As in previous wolf hunting and trapping seasons, Ojibwe tribes opted not to issue permits to individual tribal members,” said Charlie Otto Rasmussen for GLIFW. “For Ojibwe leaders and wildlife managers, the best use of tribal wolf quota



declarations is to keep live animals, live wolves on the landscape, performing their important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems.”

“Statewide wolf hunting seasons are not an effective approach to addressing local livestock depredations. Hunting wolves is not necessary to protect humans. This past season is an example of poor wildlife management, made worse by the state’s inability to control the kill.”

On Wisconsin Outdoors’ Publishers respectfully disagreed. A 2021 total harvest of 216 wolves was very close to the intended goal of

200, and the Wisconsin wolf population remains alive and well. In fact, it is our opinion that pre-wolf hunt numbers were closer to 2000 animals, at minimum, than the 1195 estimate used by the DNR.

OWO has submitted to Wisconsin DNR personnel leading the wolf management effort 35 questions and received answers which are posted for your review under Ellis Blogs on our homepage at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. OWO questions specific to tribal participation in the wolf harvest are below. Tribal intent of contributing 0 toward state wolf harvest goals is clearly established, despite consistent tribal allotment claims to 50 percent of the intended overall harvest in the ceded territories. The state refusing to acknowledge that fact will be a monumental roadblock to establishing and maintaining healthy wolf numbers in the future.

Moving forward, after four consecutive non-contributing harvest seasons by the Ojibwe, current management goals should acknowledge and accept that 0 will be a constant regardless of harvest allotment claims by the tribes. State harvest goals should be set higher accordingly.

This is a wolf management issue. Period. It requires honesty in the numbers to reach the intended population goal.

The wolf management questions below are some of 35 questions submitted by OWO to the DNR and posted with answers under Ellis Blogs at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. The DNR is also seeking public input on the Fall 2021 wolf harvest season and ongoing revision to the state's wolf management plan. Connect with Wolf Management Plan. Comment by May 15.

Was it the assumption of NRB/DNR when setting the harvest quota that the tribes would attempt to harvest the allotment they claim, or did the 200 wolf harvest goal reflect the belief that the tribes would harvest 0 animals?

The total harvest quota is determined based on biological and scientific data. The Ojibwe tribes have legal treaty rights to declare for up to 50% of allowable harvest within the ceded territory. The DNR made no assumptions about tribal harvest intentions. Once the tribal declaration was received by DNR, permit numbers available to state hunters were calculated.

With tribal harvest numbers the last 4 seasons being 0, should future harvest goals be set knowing that the tribal contribution to the harvest total will be 0?

The DNR will continue to include tribal consultation as part of the process to establish annual harvest quotas and use that consultation to inform quota recommendations.

The 2021 hunt began with allotments of 119 for state hunters and 81 for tribal members. Was the DNR harvest goal 200 or 119, regardless of tribal contribution to the harvest?

The full quota is divided between the state and tribes (119 wolves are allocated to the state, and 81 wolves are allocated to the Ojibwe Tribes in response to the Tribes' declaration and in accordance with their treaty rights within the Ceded Territory). The DNR strived to meet the statewide quota (119) as close as possible, but it was difficult in the February season based

on the number of tags that were issued under the current season structure and the reporting timelines.

Specific to that goal, would you define the final harvest of 216 wolves as acceptable or unacceptable?

Following the tribal declaration of 81 wolves in the ceded territory, the DNR harvest goal was 119 wolves in the February season. Out of honor and respect for tribal treaty rights, harvesting 216 wolves was undesirable. Biologically speaking, the harvest goal of 200 wolves was intended to maintain the population at current levels. In that case, harvesting over the harvest goal is undesirable as well, but there is variation in the expected outcome of this harvest and the additional harvest is not expected to have significant long-term population impacts.

Is it the tribes' written right by treaty to claim but not harvest their wolf allotment?

The Ojibwe tribes have legal treaty rights to declare for up to 50% of allowable harvest within the ceded territory.

What is the primary food source of the wolf in Wisconsin?

White-tailed deer.

How many deer on average will an adult wolf consume in one year?

Research in Minnesota estimated on average each wolf consumes 15-20 adult sized deer per year or their equivalent.

What would have been the estimated recruitment number of new pups this year if a hunt had not been held and assuming the population is 1200?

The estimate of 1,200 wolves (in approximately 256 packs) is from April 2020. Assuming an average litter of 5 pups apiece, the population would be expected to double immediately following in spring 2020. The spring population will decline throughout the year influenced by prey availability and the multitude of mortality sources and reach its low point again the following winter. 🐾

JOHN ELLIS

Proper Management of Wisconsin Wolves
Good for all concerned... including the wolves

Wolves, like all animals, need to be properly managed. The Wisconsin Wolf Advisory Committee recommended a management goal of 350 wolves for our state in 1999, and reaffirmed that number in 2007. That goal was met in 2004. Since then, a series of legal moves has prevented proper management and allowed the wolf population to skyrocket. Today, following the 2021 hunt, Wisconsin still has approximately 630 more wolves than the recommended management goal of 350.

This is not a question of some people liking wolves more than others; I count myself among those who like them. Rather, it's a simple question of proper wolf management. Three hundred and fifty wolves was recommended for Wisconsin and 350 wolves should be the management goal going forward. After three consecutive years of a stable population of 350, the impact should be assessed and numbers adjusted accordingly. That will serve all concerned... including the wolves. 🐾

DICK ELLIS

By the Numbers...

OWO opinions, comments and considerations on wolf management



2 elephants are in the room taking up space but largely ignored anytime the Wisconsin wolf management issue is being debated. One, 218 wolves tagged in the February hunt does not translate to a kill 86 percent over the intended harvest of 200, but rather to an outcome that hit very close to goal.

Two, with 22,400 square miles covering Wisconsin's ceded territory alone, hunters reaching the harvest goal of 200 in just 1.5 days in February reinforce the reality that Wisconsin has many more wolves over the landscape than the 1195 population estimate used pre-hunt by DNR.

You will continue to hear "slaughter" as used by anti-hunters and "wolf advocates" to inaccurately define the harvest total. We'll keep telling you the truth. The wolf is alive and well in Wisconsin.

81 wolves claimed by the Ojibwe as part of the tribes' harvest allotment within the ceded territory in the recently concluded hunt should not have been considered by DNR in the preseason calculation of total harvest goal to be targeted. The obvious intent of the tribes now and in the future as established over Wisconsin's last four hunting seasons is to harvest 0 wolves.

2 plus 0 will never equal 4 and DNR will never reach the harvest goal as is their responsibility pretending that the 2 claimed by the tribes will ever come in.

5.9 million people reside in Wisconsin. Less than 1 percent of the population is Native American. The masses are depending on the small minority to be forthcoming in their harvest intentions. A commitment to truth is imperative. The tribes, of course, are welcome to participate in the harvest. They are not welcome to use their legal claim to 50-percent of wolves to be harvested within the ceded territory as a mechanism of protection.

11 tribes of Wisconsin will meet with DNR in July in consultation on both the upcoming November 2021 wolf season harvest and long-range wolf management plans. When asked in a wolf advisory committee meeting June 22 by a committee member representing Hunting/Trapping organizations if the minutes to that tribal meeting would be made available to the Wolf Advisory Committee, DNR would not commit. Consistently, DNR uses the word, "transparency" to define its wolf management work specific to the Wisconsin resident. Transparency has consistently not been the case.

1 new organization, Hunters for Wolves, does not reflect the stand of the vast majority of Wisconsin hunters on the issue. The organization's apparent theme as seen on 3 recently erected billboards reads "Real Hunters Don't Kill Wolves". I rest my case.

The wolf is offered to consumers by DNR through Wisconsin's endangered species license plate program but is not endangered at all. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service removed the wolf from the federal endangered species list on January 4, 2021, returning management authority to state agencies. The wolf plate, with the words "Endangered Species" prominently displayed, is offered with a \$25.00 rebate by DNR through December. In this time of intense debate over Wisconsin wolf numbers,

every person not in the know encountering the plates beautiful graphic of the wolf with the message, "Endangered Species" will be receiving a powerful, but untruthful, message.

1 wolf will consume 15 to 20 adult deer annually which is one more reason that it is imperative for DNR to estimate the wolf population accurately now, and manage the wolf population correctly in the future. Man is the true apex hunter. Our deer hunting opportunities in particular in northern Wisconsin's most densely traveled wolf territory continues to decline. According to Deer & Deer Hunting magazine, more deer were killed by wolves than hunters in 2019 in Iron, Jackson, Douglas and Forest Counties.

The wolf is to be admired, for many reasons and we look forward to having him live among us far into the future. The wolf is also to be managed, correctly and in balance with all other species, including man.

And that, DNR, is your obligation, first and foremost. 



This photo of a large whitetail buck literally being eaten alive by two wolves was taken from a video now posted on the OWO website at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. Know that the video is graphic and difficult to watch, and includes the death wails of the buck as it slowly dies.

Why is this important? One, it is imperative that the wolf in Wisconsin live in proper predator/prey balance with other species here. The Wisconsin wolf population is mandated by law to be managed at 350 animals. OWO believes the current wolf population may now be as high as 5000 wolves. Know that one wolf will eat up to 20 adult deer annually, and multiply the kill seen here, if we are correct, by 100,000 wolf deer kills annually. Know too that due to the actions of a few radical groups overly represented on the DNR Wolf Advisory Committee, the wolf was placed prior to the 2022 season on the Federal Endangered Species list by another liberal judge.

The wolf is alive and too well in Wisconsin. Despite propaganda you read and hear in the Wisconsin media, the most recent Wisconsin wolf hunt in 2021 was neither a "slaughter", nor 83 percent over harvest goal of 200. The 218 wolves taken by the Wisconsin hunter exceeded the DNR harvest goal by just 9 percent. Hunters reaching the harvest goal in less than 3 days over vast amounts of territory reinforces the reality that many more wolves roam the Wisconsin landscape than the DNR, tribes, or radicals would have you believe.

Watch the wolf-deer video Wisconsin, and ask those you know to watch the video too. Read OWO reporting on the wolf issue over the past year on these 8-pages, consider other media reporting on this issue, and reach your own conclusions. Our promise to you is to bring truth in reporting to the best of our abilities.

DICK ELLIS

Casting Truth on the Wolf Issue

Who supports a Wisconsin population of 350 or less?

You're not alone in believing that Wisconsin wolf population is grossly understated by the DNR, and that the numbers need to be maintained at 350 animals or less.

Who Supports A Wolf Population Goal Of 350 Or Less In Wisconsin?

- Thirty-six Wisconsin County Boards have passed resolutions supporting a wolf goal of 350 or less, including several Boards voting for as few wolves in the state as 100, 80, or 50 or less. These 36 county boards are the elected representatives of 1,266,000 Wisconsin citizens.
- The Board votes: Barron, Burnett, Vilas, Taylor, Florence, Forest, Iron, Jackson, Lincoln, Marinette, Oconto, Oneida, Price, Shawano, Waushara, Waupaca, and Grant all passed unanimously. Adams 16 for, 2 against; Ashland 16 for, 2 against; Clark 27 for, 1 against; Langlade 14 for, 3 against; Rusk 10 for, 1 against; Sawyer 10 for, 2 against; Douglas 22 for, 2 against; Wood 14 for, 3 against; Bayfield 9 for, 3 against; Portage 22 for, 2 against; Marathon 32 for, 2 against; Marquette 16 for, 1 against; Richland 13 for, 8 against; Outagamie 30 for, 4 against; Juneau & Polk motion carried, voice vote. Washburn voted for 50 or less: 11 in favor, 9 opposed; Iowa voted 100 or less: 13 in favor, 7 opposed. The 7 opposed wanted 50 or less. Lafayette voted 80 or less: 15 for, 1 against.
- The Wisconsin Farm Bureau's 46,000 members support a wolf goal of 350 or less.
- The Wisconsin Farmer's Union supports a wolf goal of 350.
- The Wisconsin Cattleman's Association supports a wolf goal of 80, the original recovery number.
- The Indianhead Polled Hereford Assoc., Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers Association, and Wisconsin Hereford Association all support a wolf goal less than 350.
- The Wisconsin Bowhunters' Association Board and membership supports a wolf goal of 350 or less.
- The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, representing 200-plus organizations, supports a wolf goal of 350 or less.
- The Wisconsin Trappers' Association supports a goal of 350 wolves.
- The Wisconsin Bear Hunters' Association supports a goal of 100 wolves.
- In an attitude study done by the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, UW Madison, 66.5% of respondents favored a wolf population of 350 or less - Wisconsin Wolf Policy Survey - Changing Attitudes, 2001 - 2009, Adrian Treves, et al.
- The Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) Spring Hearing in 2011 voted overwhelming in favor of reducing the wolf population to 350 or less (3989 for/827 against, passing in all 72 counties). 350 or less was again approved by WCC delegates at the 2013 annual convention.

Where Did The Number 350 Come From?

In the Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan approved in 1999 and 2007, the goal was 350 wolves. The DNR is currently mandated by law to manage state wolf numbers to 350. 🐾



What You Need to Know Before the Fall Wolf Hunt

After the February 2021 Wolf Hunt, Wisconsin had a conservative estimate of 900 wolves in the state based on the DNR's own pre-hunt numbers (Many, including this publication, believe those pre-hunt numbers were far below the actual numbers). Since then, and once again conservatively, 600 more wolves were born and survived bringing the state population to 1500 today.

If the upcoming Fall Wolf Hunt harvest goal of 300 animals is met, the state of Wisconsin will still have a minimum of 1200 wolves. That is 343% more than the recommended management goal of 350; a goal that the vast majority of you want.

Our state wolf population is out of control and growing because of DNR mismanagement.

DICK ELLIS

November Wolf Hunt Halted

Skyrocketing numbers now left unmanaged

If ever a spotlight was placed on the fox guarding the henhouse, it would be when the DNR was named defendant in a lawsuit brought by radical advocacy groups intent on stopping the fall 2021 wolf hunt. The hen house, in this case, includes the state deer herd, livestock interests, hospitality businesses that serve dwindling deer hunter numbers in northern Wisconsin, and the hunter himself. Conflicts caused by too many wolves continue to increase. They're about to get much worse.

Dane County Judge Jacob Frost issued a preliminary injunction in late October that blocked the wolf hunting season slated to begin November 6. In his ruling on the lawsuit brought by plaintiffs Animal Wellness Action, Center for Humane Economy, Friends of Wisconsin Wolf and Wildlife, Project Coyote and Wisconsin resident Pat Clark, Frost ordered the DNR to set wolf quotas of zero in each management zone for the season.

On Wisconsin Outdoors has closely scrutinized and reported on DNR wolf management practices extensively throughout 2021. Despite being mandated by law to manage state wolf numbers to 350 under a Wolf Management Plan, the agency abandoned that ceiling long ago, claiming falsely the number was a starting point. The Wisconsin Wolf Management plan with a goal of 350 was approved in 1999 and 2007. With spring pup recruitment estimated at 600, the current population estimate is 1,500 wolves.

Despite continuous DNR claims of science-based management and transparency neither occurred. A DNR public survey in 2021 designed to steer management decisions was emotion-based with questions soliciting how respondents "felt" about the wolf in Wisconsin. Respondents could participate even if non-residents, and vote as often as they wished.

A Wolf Advisory Committee appointed by DNR was stacked in favor of anti-hunting and wolf advocacy groups despite the minority in committee representing many more residents in favor of wolves being managed by set law. For example, 36 Wisconsin County Boards, elected representatives of 1,266,000 Wisconsin residents, support a wolf goal of 350 or less.

DNR also included in total harvest goals Ojibwe tribal claims to 50 percent of wolf harvest allotments in ceded territories, knowing the tribes would not harvest any animal due to viewing the wolf as a spiritual brother. This fact of state mismanagement was first brought to the public by OWO, knowing that overall management numbers would fall far short of goal without tribal participation. OWO has also scrutinized court-ordered rights that give tribes 50 percent of the harvest in ceded territory. Clearly, the tribes' right is to "take" or "harvest". It is not to use a court order as a mechanism of protection for the wolf.

Ojibwe tribes in Wisconsin also have a lawsuit pending against the DNR and Natural Resources Board (NRB), claiming the fall wolf hunt would have knowingly discriminated against the Ojibwe tribes by acting to nullify their share. Although defendants in the suit, the DNR and NRB are not in alliance. The NRB majority, working for the people of Wisconsin as an advisory board to the DNR, had set a quota of 300 wolves for the November hunt that accounted for tribal intent to again claim allotment but not contribute to the harvest. In an unprecedented move, the DNR rejected the NRB recommendation and set the quota at 130 including 74 wolves that would again be claimed but not harvested by the tribes.



With the judicial ruling halting the November hunt, no harvest will take place and wolf-human conflict will surely escalate severely. For the DNR... mission accomplished.

"With the state defending the hunt and their proven long-time record of minimizing hunts or avoiding harvests, it is no surprise," said Laurie Groskoph, a member of the wolf advisory committee and trusted source for OWO. "I feel the level of incompetence within the DNR is unprecedented." Read Groskoph's entire article at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com under Outdoor News.

"Why the DNR is trying to protect and expand state wolf populations is difficult to understand," said Mike Brust, President of the Wisconsin Bowhunters Association. "I was directly involved in the existing wolf management plan and its revision. I can say for a fact that the 350 was intended as a population goal that we should manage to, exactly as the plan states. That is contrary to new 'interpretations' by Secretary Cole, Deputy Secretary Ambs and Keith Warnke, who now say it was only a starting point. None of whom were there at the time."

Brust said analysis in 2015 used the DNR's own information of existing numbers of wolves and pack locations, combined with the DNR's own estimate of the average number of deer taken per wolf and in 5 northern counties found wolves took more deer than hunters did. "The wolf population was substantially less then, and the number of wolves was based on the minimum over-winter count, not the larger actual population or the mid-summer population. Obviously, in much of the North, wolves now take many more deer than hunters do. Clearly that has a devastating impact on businesses in the North that depend on deer hunting revenue."

"But keep in mind, it's an anti-hunters dream. If wolves control the deer, there will no longer be a need for hunters." 🐾

JIM ELLIS

The Wolf Factor

And the decline of Wisconsin deer hunting

What is going on with Wisconsin's deer hunting? The numbers below reflect the decline in deer killed by hunting from 1998 through 2020. The numbers were supplied by the Wisconsin DNR and for simplicity 3 year averages were taken in 5 year blocks so you don't have to read endless numbers.

3 year averages over 22 years also covers variations in the severity of winter and its impact on deer population.

Gun kills in 2018-2020 are down 197,977 on average annually from the 1998-2000 time period.

Wisconsin firearms hunters killed 593,932 less deer in 2018-2020 compared to 1998-2000.

Bow kills in 2018-2020 are up 13,660 on average annually from the 1998-2000 time period.

Wisconsin archery hunters killed 40,980 more deer in 2018-2020 compared to 1998-2000. This increase does not explain the reduction in gun kills because we're still down 552,952 deer killed by gun and archery hunters combined from 2018-2000 when compared to 1998-2000.

From this writer's perspective the two greatest impacts are the purposeful reduction in deer herd because of fears of CWD and the increase in the wolf population due to not managing the numbers.

If CWD is a real threat, then baiting and feeding should immediately be banned statewide instead of waiting to see what counties are testing positive before the ban. If baiting and feeding bans assist in CWD reduction, why wait for the disease to show up before reacting? It's like saying smoke until you get lung cancer...then quit smoking.

The wolf advocates say that based on modeling the wolf numbers are not out of control and don't have much impact on deer hunting success.

The model that I was given from the "wolf expert," formerly a Wisconsin DNR employee and now an activist for the group bringing

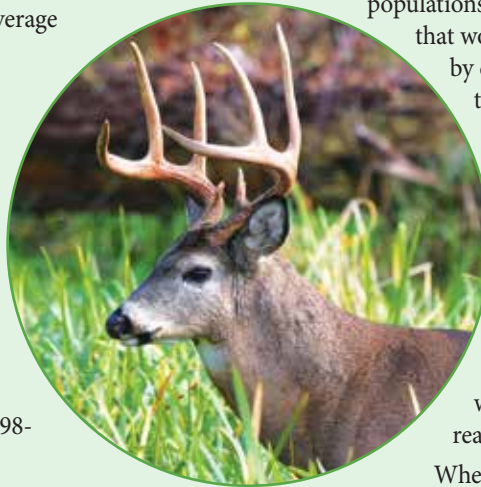
lawsuits to prevent wolf hunting, never shows any increase in the wolf population no matter what number of wolves you start with. So we know the model is incorrect because the wolf population has grown by their own estimates to over 1,100 wolves in 2020 from 250 wolves in the year 2000. The DNR also uses other modeling instead of actually counting wolves to estimate population.

The same advocates who say the wolves don't reduce deer populations enough to negatively impact deer hunting say that wolves are needed to reduce over browsing of forests by deer and reduce car/deer accidents. Deer browse; they are not harmful to forests.

Logically you can't say wolves reduce the deer herd enough to prevent over browsing and car/deer accidents but don't impact hunting success negatively.

Information regarding wolf pup survival rates and population growth, received from a different and trusted wolf expert, puts the population of wolves in the state at over 5,000 wolves. We need an actual count, not modeling to reach the accurate number of wolves.

When proper management does call for deer reduction in any Wisconsin Deer Management Unit, man, not an overpopulation of wolves, is by far the most effective tool to accomplish the goal. Control of deer herd numbers is the job of hunters, not wolves. 🐾



	Total Gun Kill <i>Includes Muzzleloader</i>	Total Bow Kill <i>Includes Crossbow</i>	Total kill
1998-2000 Average	420,984	84,767	505,751
2003-2005 Average	396,482	92,543	489,025
2008-2010 Average	282,500	90,119	372,619
2013-2015 Average	233,440	85,457	318,897
2018-2020 Average	223,007	98,427	321,434

JIM ELLIS

Wolf Mismanagement

The logic factor in the decline of northern Wisconsin deer hunting

In a recent issue of *On Wisconsin Outdoors*, I looked at the decline in deer hunting success over the past two decades in Wisconsin, and asserted that the three biggest problems were wolves, Chronic Wasting Disease, and poor management of both by the DNR.

In this issue, I'll look with more detail at wolves.

As I write, a federal judge has relisted the wolf as endangered. To show how ridiculous this is, I found the "Summary of the Wisconsin DNR Wolf Management Plan, Prepared by the US Fish and Wildlife Service on October 27, 1999."

According to the summary:

Numerical Targets and State Reclassification/ Delisting/ Relisting Criteria

Minimum population management goal is 350 (late winter counts) outside of Indian Reservations.

250 wolves (outside reservations) for one year - State delists and wolves become "protected non-game species."

80 for three years (already achieved) - State reclassified to threatened (done in October 1999).

Decline to less than 250 for three years - State relists as threatened.

Decline to less than 80 for one year - State relists/reclassifies as endangered.

Under Habitat Protection in the summary, it calls for vegetation management that provides younger forests and winter vegetation cover that favor wolf-prey species (deer and beaver).

Population Management

Four management zones are established to provide different wolf management practices. However, after the wolf is Federally delisted, Tribes will determine wolf management practices on tribal lands.

Zone 1 - Northern Forest - 18,384 square miles in northern Wisconsin, including 634 square miles of Indian reservation; contains 90 percent of the state's primary wolf habitat and can support 300 - 500 wolves.

Depredation problems will be resolved



The use of hounds to push wolves past hunters with firearms is often criticized as "barbaric" by anti-hunting groups who thrive on misinformation. This photo of wolves eating a large buck alive emphasizes the need for proper game management in Wisconsin, including the proper balance of predator and prey currently lacking.

by government trapping within 1/2 mile of the depredation site and translocation or euthanizing. Landowners will be reimbursed for their losses to wolf predation. Management actions to be encouraged on public land include protection of dens and rendezvous sites, access management and management of forests to promote prey species. There will be no coyote hunting during the deer firearm season.

Words have meaning.

1) According to the report, Zone 1 is 90 percent of the state's primary wolf habitat and can support 300 to 500 wolves. So, statewide, the maximum that can be supported is 555 wolves.

2) Currently, according to the Wisconsin Gray Wolf Monitoring Report (April 15, 2019, through April 2020), the wolf population count is 1,034 - 1,057. That is a minimum of 697 wolves over carrying capacity in the state based on the Wisconsin DNR's own plan.

Based on information I have received from a member of the wolf advisory board and the survival rate of pups, it's likely that the population is 5,000 wolves. If this is correct, we're 4,640 wolves over the number that the habitat can support.

3) According to the report, Zone 1 is 18,384 square miles and includes 634 square miles of Indian reservation. The Indian reservation



This trail cam photo taken in Bayfield County in 2022 captures a gray wolf with bear cub in its mouth.

makes up 3.4% of this area so they can manage 12 - 17 wolves based on the statement under "population management" that Tribes will determine management practices on tribal lands.

4) At the time of the summary, Wisconsin's deer herd was 1,900,000 strong and could support up to 555 wolves.

5) Wisconsin's deer herd is currently 1,250,000. That's 35 percent less deer, so logically we can now support 360 wolves statewide.

Zone 2, according to the summary, could support 20 - 40 wolves.

Zone 3, according to the summary, could support 20 wolves maximum.

Zone 4 has almost no potential for wolf colonization.

After the state delisted, landowners can kill wolves in the act of attacking pets or livestock. Currently this is not allowed.

Public Harvest is not included in this plan summary, but it does discuss the possibility of public harvest after the statewide population (outside Indian reservations) reaches 350 wolves.

Based on this plan and all of the data, there is no way the wolves should be relisted, and it's the duty of the Wisconsin DNR to challenge this ruling in a higher court.

If we're going to get back to the days of great deer hunting and all of the benefits that go along with it, we're going to have to demand that we manage the wolves back to 360 - the supportable number based on the current deer population in the great state of Wisconsin. 🐾

JIM ELLIS

The Wisconsin Wolf

Far from endangered and a need for delisting

In the January-February issue of OWO we looked at the decline in Wisconsin deer hunting success from the year 1998 to 2020 using numbers from the DNR.

In the year 2000 it was estimated that there were 250 wolves in the state and we had fantastic deer hunting. The wolf population has since increased a minimum of 450% to as much as 2,000%. Combined kills by gun and archery hunters are down 552,952 when comparing the years 2018-2020 to 1998-2000.

In the July-August issue of OWO we looked at the DNR's own plan and the fact that the state could only support 555 wolves when the deer population was at 1,900,000. The deer population is now estimated to be 1,200,000 so the statewide maximum wolf population needs to be 360 wolves. Based on estimates of pup survival given to OWO by a trusted source of expertise on the state Wolf Advisory Board, we think the wolf population is near 5,000.

This issue we again examine the misinformation and purposeful propaganda coming from the DNR, animal rights radicals and mainstream media that has dishonestly contributed to the recent relisting of the Wisconsin wolf as endangered and federally protected. Lie number one is that the latest wolf hunt exceeded harvest goal by 83 percent. As reported in the OWO column "Wolf Hunt Meets Harvest Goal-Are state population numbers far understated?" published in the March-April issue, the harvest goal for the February 2021 hunt was 200 as unanimously voted for by the NRB.

"There's still a probability that a quota of 200 may reduce the population or it may allow the population to expand," said DNR Wildlife Biologist and wolf program head Randy Johnson at a media briefing held post-hunt February 25. "At 216, we're at a relatively small percentage over total quota. I would say there is low concern at a population level of any significant effect there."

It's a lie to say the harvest quota was anything but 200. 216 wolves were killed or 16 over the goal of 200. The overharvest is 8 percent, not 83 percent. The fact that Ojibwe tribes elected not to contribute to harvest numbers despite claiming their allotted quota of 81 wolves is a non-factor to the harvest goal.

As reported by OWO, in Wisconsin's three previous wolf hunts held in 2012/13, 2013/14



Pine Camp Curve sends this photo of seven wolves on a bait in Ashland County. Every one of 16 bear bait sites over 100 miles are being hit by wolves.

and 2014/15, the Ojibwe also claimed their legal allotment but did not participate in the hunt, contributing 0 wolves to each harvest total. After four consecutive non-contributing harvest seasons by the Ojibwe, future management goals should acknowledge and accept that 0 will be a constant regardless of harvest allotment claims by the tribes. State harvest goals should be set higher accordingly; this after all is a game management issue.

In a 2013 Wisconsin Outdoor News column, Bill Vander Zouwen, then DNR Wildlife Ecology Section chief said "If you approve a quota for 275 wolves, we have an obligation to try to meet that quota in our harvest. That's what you're expecting, that's what the public is expecting. We have to look at past (tribal) performance, and the leadership of the DNR will have to make a decision on what to set aside for the tribes."

In the article, Vander Zouwen said the agency expected an estimated 13 percent decrease in the minimum wolf count with that quota. "That's still conservative," he said, noting that research shows that wolves can sustain a 30 to 35 percent annual loss before numbers start to drop. "The objective is for a sustainable wolf population and to reduce the population. It's a very diverse issue, and we recognize that. In my 30 years with the DNR, I never expected to be involved in wolf management."

Vander Zouwen said this when the population was estimated to be 800 wolves. Once we get the wolves back to 350 we need to hunt 30-35 percent annually to keep them at that level. We need an accurate count of the wolf population, not estimates.

That rings even more true today. In the same

article, Mike Riggle then the new chairman of the Conservation Congress' wolf committee, said the congress has long supported managing wolves to a goal of 350. "This is a highly charged and emotional issue on both sides, but you have to agree that the wolf population is a success story," said Riggle, a veterinarian. "The Conservation Congress supports the harvest quota. We're pleased that it's 275, but that should be exclusive of tribal harvest." These statements confirm that the quota is the quota regardless of what the tribes elect to harvest. Saying anything else is a lie.

The second major deception concerns the population of wolves in Wisconsin. DNR currently estimates the wolf population count at 1034-1057 wolves using the 2020 minimum population count as stated in the "Wisconsin Gray Wolf Monitoring Report (15 April 2019 Through 14 April 2020)". According to the report, the wolf pack range was estimated to be 23,313 square miles and wolf density is estimated to be one wolf per 22.0-22.5 square miles of wolf pack range. This was calculated by dividing probable wolf pack range by the minimum population count in the report.

The same report estimates deer density in the contiguous wolf pack range at 24 deer per square miles, or 528 times wolf numbers in the wolf territory. One wolf per 22 square miles and 24 deer per square mile is obviously incorrect. We are asked to believe that 2,380 wolf permit holders killed 20 percent of the wolf population in just two plus days of hunting. If every permit holder was in the field for the entire legal shooting hours, each one would have to cover 9.8 square miles and 1 in every 11 hunters would make contact with a wolf and kill it.

570,901 deer hunters during the 9 day gun hunting season killed 17% of the estimated deer population. Deer density is 528 times the wolf density, according to the DNR, yet we only kill 17% in 9 days compared to 20% of the wolves in just over 2 days. This doesn't hold up to anyone looking for the truth.

Lie number 3 is the sale of endangered license plates with pictures of wolves on them. Currently the wolf is the only mammal on the plates. When people see them they think the wolf is endangered. Wolves are considered endangered both federally and by the state if they number 80 or less. The ruling by an activist judge saying they are endangered does not change this. 🐾

HELP SHAPE WISCONSIN'S DEER SEASON



ATTEND 2022 DEER SEASON PLANNING MEETINGS
MARCH 21-31



DICK ELLIS

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation challenges DNR Draft Wolf Management Plan

Wisconsin DNR posted a 167-page Draft Wolf Management Plan on November 11, 2022 that eliminates “a single numeric population goal”. DNR requested that respondents “invest time in reading the draft before submitting feedback”. Feedback, for reasons unknown, is accepted from Wisconsin residents and non-residents.

On *Wisconsin Outdoors* (OWO) received the letter to follow from the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF) responding to the plan. The WWF represents 211 affiliated grassroots hunting, angling and sporting conservation clubs throughout Wisconsin. OWO strongly recommends that your investment of time goes to reading the 1-1/2 pages below prior to connecting with DNR Draft Plan through the DNR website.

OWO sought input on the DNR plan from Laurie Groskopf, who we have learned to trust as a wolf management source of expertise. Groskopf is on the Board of Directors for the WWF, and a delegate to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress but stressed that she is commenting as an individual and not as a representative of any organization.

“My main reaction is disbelief that the spread of wolves and conflicts has not been recognized as the threat to rural life it is,” she said. “L. David Mech, the world’s longest and most experienced wolf researcher, said ‘Some zones for some periods can support total protection (of wolves), whereas in others, wolf numbers will have to be reduced to various degrees or removed. They are prolific, disperse long distances, readily recolonize new areas where humans allow them, and are difficult to control when populations become established.’”

“All of this is lost on the WDNR. DNR uses no science but makes the decision to extensively enlarge what they define as suitable wolf habitat. They use only the fact that wolves live there, so in their mind, it must be suitable habitat.”

In the Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan



approved in 1999 and 2007, the population goal was 350 wolves. DNR is currently mandated by law to manage state wolf numbers to 350. Thirty-six Wisconsin County Boards have passed resolutions supporting a wolf goal of 350 or less. These 36 county boards are the elected representatives of 1,266,000 Wisconsin citizens.

DNR is using a 2022 “Social Science” Survey to claim majority public support for a wolf population clearly growing and expanding in Wisconsin. Groskopf pointed to the 2022 Spring Hearings, where Wisconsin residents approved a wolf goal of 350 or less (in favor: 12,978. Against: 6,410), a resolution supported in 69 of the state’s 72 counties.

“For reasons I don’t comprehend, the DNR is deaf to these and other opinions that the wolf population needs to be limited and controlled,”

Groskopf said. “As every wolf expert said at an International Wolf Conference in October, 2022, wolves are fine in areas with minimal human presence and enough game to eat. However, Wisconsin has by far the highest human density of any wolf-recovered state. Unfortunately, the DNR is promoting wolf persecution by insisting wolves be allowed to occupy all or portions of 37 counties in Wisconsin, with the great possibility they will expand into adjacent counties and states. There are no controls on their numbers. Very sad for the wolves. Very sad for people in wolf-occupied areas.”

As the WWF states: The draft plan allows for a subjective process for managing wolves. The population goal was established in the 1999 plan due to lack of confidence in a subjective wolf management strategy. There is no accountability without a numeric population goal. The only scientific analysis of wolf habitat done to-date of Wisconsin landscape quantified the social carrying capacity as 350 wolves. The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation strongly requests maintaining the numeric population goal of 350 wolves in the final plan. 🐾

JOHN ELLIS DNR Mismanagement goes far beyond Wolves

In the Winter 2022 edition of *Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine*, Dana Fulton Porter writes “Due to climate change, the ice fishing season in Wisconsin is about 24 days shorter than it was in the 1970’s.” Let that sink in for a moment, and use your judgment. You don’t have to be a scientist to know that Dana’s statement is ridiculous. But it’s a great illustration of how Wisconsin DNR mismanagement, and misinformation, goes far beyond wolves. It’s everywhere. 🐾



WISCONSIN WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

December 10, 2022

Sarah Barry
Deputy Secretary
Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources
101 S. Webster St.
Madison, WI 53707-7921

Dear Deputy Secretary Barry,

At our Board meeting today, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, with more than 211 affiliated grassroots hunting, angling, and sporting conservation clubs and alliances throughout the state, approved the following response to the WDNR 2022 Draft Wolf Management Plan and requests the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources take the necessary actions to address the following points in a revised draft or final plan:

Public Comment:

1. The current 60-day public comment period is not an adequate amount of time to gather input considering the timing of the release overlaps with hunting seasons and multiple holidays. We request the timeline be extended to 90-days.
2. Not all residents have email or computer access in their homes. For this reason, we request the WI DNR provide multiple and widely distributed announcements of opportunities and methods for public input along with comment period deadlines.
3. There is no means for submitting additional supporting information to the WI DNR for consideration in the draft plan. The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation requests the WI DNR provide the public with an email and mailing address to submit comments and additional supporting information.
4. The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation strongly requests the WI DNR hold public hearings across the state and hold more in wolf affected zones for input on the draft plan.

Inclusion/Exclusion:

5. There is no provision for the inclusion of comments from county and local governments into the draft plan. Many county and local governments have taken positions on wolf population goals and must be included in the process.
6. A functional advisory committee with a balanced mix of impacted stakeholders would vastly improve this ongoing process.

Public Survey Methodology:

7. The public survey does not adequately represent those actively impacted by wolves. Use of county and zip codes to select samples does not accurately reflect those exposed to wolves and impacted by wolves. We request the WI DNR actively seek out those impacted by wolves

and place greater emphasis on their perspective.

8. Survey design is flawed. Survey length discourages responses from some individuals. Terminology is undefined and could be seen as biased. Some questions lack balance in positive and negative responses, causing an imbalance in responses. All these features of the survey alienate some individuals causing them to not respond.

Population Estimates:

9. Approximately 40% of the wolf tracking units are not tracked to the required three-time standard and not all units are tracked. This lends itself to under-counting and under-reporting wolf population in those wolf tracking units.
10. Lone and dispersing wolves are not counted in the current population model as is done in western states. Some states add 12% or 15% to their estimates to account for lone and dispersing wolves. We urge lone wolves be included in Wisconsin's population estimate.
11. The WI DNR is not taking full advantage of public reporting of wolf sightings. The online tool for reporting should be better advertised and the WI DNR should clarify that personal information is protected and not available as public record.
12. GPS collar tracking provides the WI DNR with useful information on travel patterns and pack locations for counting. Increased use of GPS collars should be considered.

Conflict Management:

13. The draft management plan is passive and lacks active conflict management for depredations of non-agricultural domestic animals such as dogs and other pets. Increased harvest is not a method identified in the draft plan to reduce such depredations. Include targeted population reduction in areas of heavy depredation of dogs and other non-agricultural domestic animals. This should include all legal methods of harvest for targeted population reductions.
14. The draft plan does not address a numeric conflict reduction goal. We request a goal be set and included in the plan so effectiveness of methods can be measured.
15. The draft plan appears to have biases against hunting with dogs. Hunting with hounds has the same statutory and state constitutional protections as agriculture and should have equal active measures preventing depredations.
16. We oppose the plan wording encouraging low road densities in large tracts of public lands, which is another means to prevent hunting, fishing, trapping, and other public land use opportunities.

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

WWF, FROM PAGE 13

17. We oppose the plan wording that implies hunting conflicts are the fault of the hunter. The draft plan needs to address using population management of wolves as a method to reduce hunting conflicts. Hunters have Constitutional rights to hunt lands open to them despite the presence of wolves.
18. Currently there are multiple systems for sending alerts for livestock, hunting dogs, and non-agricultural animals, but the plan is missing human health and safety alerts. Receiving the same notification with a 4-mile radius map is necessary to help prevent potential conflicts for land users, pet owners, and dog hunters around those areas. We request the WI DNR provide equal notifications for equal protections for all land users.
19. Those who have personally experienced conflicts with wolves may have traumatic experiences and stresses. The psychological impacts on humans caused by livestock and domestic depredations by wolves is real and needs to be considered. The draft plan ignores the psychological impacts wolf conflicts have on humans and this needs to be addressed in the plan.

Zone Changes:

20. The plan includes the creation of buffer zones surrounding reservations, effectively giving the management of the wolf population on both public and private lands to the tribes. We oppose the creation of buffer zones surrounding reservations that would take away the rights of private landowners and public land stakeholders. We also oppose giving away wildlife management authority.
21. The agricultural areas in these newly created buffer zones in the draft plan will go largely unprotected and have inadequate protections for pets and livestock. Private landowners will have unequal treatment under the law for which they are protected under the Constitution.
22. The zone restructure is now based on wolf occupancy and not based on suitable habitat. The unmanaged wolf population has forced wolves out of prime suitable habitat into inappropriate areas, creating conflicts. Not all areas are appropriate to have wolves. We request the zone structure return to the original science-based, habitat-based zones.

Goal Statement/Objectives:

23. The Goal Statement in the draft plan does not address where wolves are appropriate. The draft plan needs to take a hard look into what is good for wolves and what is good for humans. Low interactions between the two are best. Wolves should only reside in high-quality wolf habitat and not be managed to the maximum biological carrying capacity. No other species in Wisconsin is managed to its maximum biological carrying capacity.
24. The draft plan implies the elimination of hunting with dogs which is Constitutionally protected. It also implies wolves have more rights to the land than hunters. This narrative is not science-based and all such implications should be removed.
25. Objective B is missing long-term controls for agricultural conflicts. Wolves are known to move down the road and create conflicts with just short-term controls.

26. The goal statement or objectives do not address any form of population control. The official position of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation is a population goal of 350 wolves in the State of Wisconsin. We strongly request the numeric population goal of 350 wolves be maintained in the final plan.

Numerical Population Goal:

27. The draft plan allows for a subjective process for managing wolves. The population goal was established in the 1999 plan due to lack of confidence in a subjective wolf management strategy. There is no accountability without a numeric population goal. The only scientific analysis of wolf habitat done to-date of Wisconsin landscape quantified the social carrying capacity as 350 wolves. The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation strongly requests maintaining the numeric population goal of 350 wolves in the final plan.
28. For increased accountability the population goal needs to have a timeline for completion. The goal timeline allows measuring of progress towards meeting the set population goal with milestones along the way. We request a population goal timeline be added to the plan.

Quotas/Permits:

29. The western states have 13 years of harvest data in establishing quotas to reach their wolf population goals. We recommend including this data in the draft plan to aid in establishing quotas.
30. Permit issuing methodology should be based on the likely harvest methods used in the season they will be issued.
31. Western states have been unable to reduce their wolf numbers consistently despite high levels of human take. As wolf expert David Mech said, "Wolves are prolific, disperse long distances, readily recolonize new areas where humans will allow them, and are difficult to control when populations become established."

Delisting:

32. For lethal wolf conflict control and population management to take place federal delisting is required. To-date the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has had no visible involvement in planning, researching, and federal delisting efforts with the USFWS or with legal representation in delisting efforts. The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation strongly requests the WI DNR have a strong and visible presence, and active involvement in all federal delisting efforts that impact Wisconsin and in support of all other states actively working towards delisting wolves in their states.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation requests the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources incorporate the above actions and requests for updates into the 2022 Final Wolf Management Plan.

Sincerely yours,



Patrick Quaintance
President



DICK ELLIS

Aging Hunters, Mast Crops, or Wolves?

Considering factors in the decline of Wisconsin deer and bear harvests

As deer hunters who have hunted Vilas County for decades, OWO publishers believe the decline in quality deer hunting in Wisconsin directly correlates with the drastic increase in wolf numbers. The DNR reports 2023 harvest declines in deer but emphasizes a harsh winter and the loss of hunter participation due to an aging population. Little mention if any of the wolf factor and decline in opportunities to even see a deer in particular in the north country. DNR reports the 2023 decline in the bear harvest but points as a factor to an abundant acorn crop competing with hunters maintaining bait sites.

OWO, and our sources of expertise with extensive experience hunting deer in the north and guiding for bear with great success, question it.

Harvest figures from the DNR for the 2023 deer season showed hunters registered 173,942 deer during the 2023 gun-deer season, including 85,390 antlered and 88,552 antlerless deer. Compared to 2022, the total firearm deer season harvest was down 17.6 percent statewide, with the antlered harvest down 14.7 percent and the antlerless harvest down 20.3 percent.

Comparing the harvest with the five-year average, each of the four Wisconsin Deer Management Zones in Wisconsin saw harvest declines. Focusing on the Northern Forest, the antlered harvest of 17,715 was down 14.7 percent from the five-year average with antlerless harvest of 10,305 down 27.2 percent.

According to the DNR, "Wisconsin bear hunters harvested 2,922 bears during the 2023 season, a marked decrease from the 4,009 taken by hunters in 2022. The decline



Are wolves preying on bear cubs and beaver also impacting those population numbers in Wisconsin in addition to declining deer numbers?



11-23-23 Shawano County 1 Wolf



8-8-22 Barron County 5 Wolves

was observed across the state, with the bear harvest falling short of respective targets in all management zones. The harvest is well below the recent annual average of approximately 4,000 bears harvested, and the lowest yearly bear harvest since 2008."

"I believe wolves are really targeting bears and that means bear cubs primarily from dens because it's the easy meal," said Mike Foss, who guided bear hunters in Wisconsin for 16 years with as many as 25 hunters in camp and a consistent success rate of 95 percent. Foss also continues to hunt deer in Bayfield County, with dismal results. "If you run out of hamburger at the grocery store, you still have to eat so you look for something else to buy. I

think the deer population has been depleted by wolves, and the wolves are looking elsewhere."

"In my years of guiding for bear in Wisconsin, we had huge acorn crops. Regardless of the natural food sources, we always had bear. Our success rate was 95 percent and we had six, seven, eight, nine different bears coming into every bait site. Those days of multiple bears coming to bait are done. I talked to three different groups of hound hunters this fall and they all said 2023 was the worst year for bear numbers ever."

"Trappers are complaining that there are no beavers. Wolves target beavers big time. Again,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

AGING HUNTERS, *FROM PAGE 15*

when there is no venison, the wolves will target other sources, and that means beaver too.”

Hunters are feeling the impact of wolf expansion in more and more regions of Wisconsin. In the Ashland Press, I read syndicated outdoor columnist Mark Walters’ comments on his group’s 52nd year hunting the vast and beautiful Necedah National Wildlife Area in Wisconsin’s Central Forest Zone.

In the past, Walters writes, “it was a given” to see 25 to 45 deer on opening weekend. In 2023, he became concerned when two hours after daybreak he had not heard a shot or encountered any other hunters or deer. Texts coming in from his hunting partners and local friends carried the same message when the ice was broken with another text. A 49-year veteran of the deer camp had seen his first deer, and right behind it a wolf.

Text after text, Walters states, carried the “real theme” of the 2023 hunt “Wolf stories, and very few deer being spotted. Tonight, at camp, not one of us out of 17 had a deer on the pole.”

Walters speaks for OWO and countless Wisconsin hunters when he concludes his column. “I respect the wolf. I also respect common sense management of all forms of wildlife.”

Mike Foss said this about the north country, but take it as a warning for a tidal wave that may be looming statewide and only resolved with proper management to bring Wisconsin wolf numbers back to where they were intended to be.

“The southern counties might be okay... for now,” Foss said. “But in the north, do you think kids are going to sit all day in the woods, not see a deer, and then go out again the next day? If the whole intent of the DNR really is to recruit more and more hunters, they need to ensure there are more deer on the landscape, and that means less wolves.” 🐾



10-28-23 Price County 1 Wolf



11-19-23 Florence County 7 Wolves



9-29-23 Adams County 1 Wolf



9-14-23 Bayfield County 4 Wolves



9-12-23 Clark County 5 Wolves

Seeking Wisconsin Wolf Photos

If the DNR reported that Wisconsin had a population of 1000 deer, instead of 1000 wolves, and the first 7 photos that arrived from Wisconsin residents in an informal tracking survey attempting to estimate the population showed 25 deer from 7 different counties stretching from the far north to mid-state, would you believe the DNR estimate?

The first photos of wolves that came to *On Wisconsin Outdoors (OWO)* from readers recently reflect trail camera shots taken in seven Wisconsin counties. With your help, we hope *On Wisconsin Outdoors*’ ongoing project helps determine a more accurate estimate of the number of wolves in Wisconsin.

Please send your trail cam photos of wolves to: wolves@onwisconsinoutdoors.com. List the county where the photos were taken, the date, and verify the number of wolves visible in each photo. Your name will not be published or used.

Among three main objectives, the DNR Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan approved in 2023 states “Providing multiple benefits associated with the wolf population, including hunting, trapping, and sightseeing”.

Sightseeing? Does the DNR even believe their own estimate of 1000 wolves? Don’t get on that bus.

DICK ELLIS

Seeking Wolf Photos

OWO's informal census continues

On Wisconsin Outdoors' informal wolf census continues. Please send your trail cam photos of wolves in Wisconsin to: wolves@onwisconsinoutdoors.com. List the county where the photos were taken, the date, and verify the number of wolves visible in each photo. Your name will not be published.

OWO publishers do not believe the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) population estimate that place wolf numbers in Wisconsin at 1007 animals during the winter of 2022/23. We do believe that an unmanaged wolf population in the state directly correlates with a severely declining deer hunting experience particularly in the north country. We believe that the decline in our Wisconsin tradition will magnify further as individual wolves and wolf packs continue to expand to create an increasingly out-of-balance predator/prey ratio.

By the numbers, since OWO asked for your trail cam photos of wolves we have received 17 photos from readers and published since January, 2024. The shots include a total of 50 wolves scattered over 12 counties; Bayfield, Barron, Iron, Price, Clark, Wood, Adams, Juneau, Florence, Forest, Oconto and Shawano. In our ongoing project, red on the adjacent Wisconsin map will represent counties from which we have received wolf photos.

To date, using the state mark of approximately 1000 wolves, with 17 snapshots taken over an approximately 16 percent of Wisconsin's 72 counties, we have in theory captured approximately five percent of the DNR's estimated population. The photo contributions represent only a literal snapshot of the vast territory within each of the 12 counties, with the large majority of northern and central Wisconsin counties from verified wolf strongholds not yet contributing a single photo to our informal survey.

Did our readers to date capture five percent of the state wolf population from 17 tree mounts, or are wolf numbers grossly underestimated?

Thank you for sending your trail cam photos of wolves, and for informing friends, local sports shop owners, shooting clubs or



4-21-2023 Juneau County 1 Wolf

other possible sources that OWO is asking for photos that will help verify or challenge state population estimates. Healthy, science-based wildlife management is only possible with accurate numbers of predator and prey serving as the foundation for decisions.

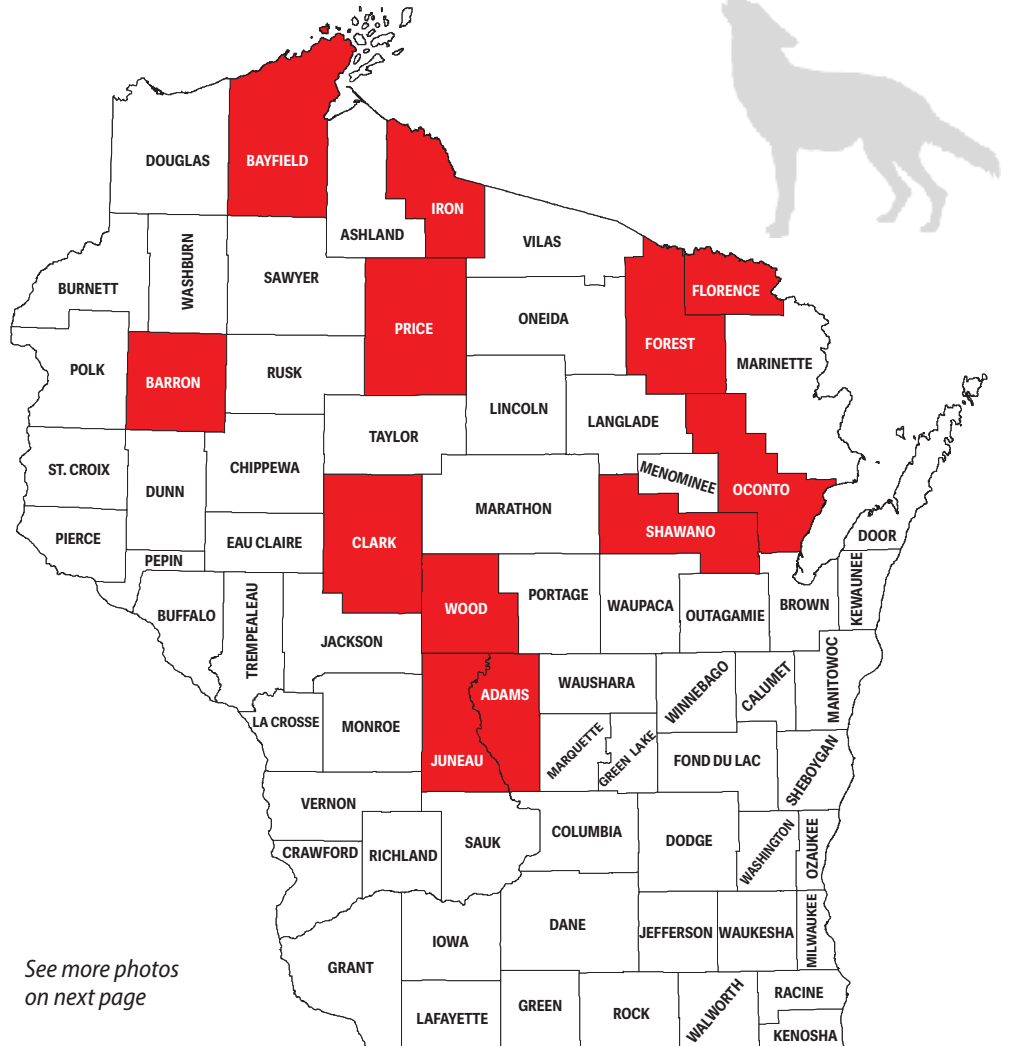
Help us verify truth in numbers. Wherever it leads us. 🐾



11-30-2019 Forest County Wolf Killing Deer in Progress



1-25-2024 Clark County 1 Wolf



See more photos
on next page

DICK ELLIS

Predator Myths

Is wolf or man the most efficient tool for Wisconsin deer management?

This trail cam photo from Forest County submitted by an OWO reader shows a wolf taking down a fawn. Each wolf will take the equivalent of 20 adult deer annually.

Think critically when you listen to or read information from organizations like Sierra Club-Wisconsin Chapter, Wisconsin Greenfire, Humane Society of the United States, or DNR regarding the need for more wolves on our landscape. The wolf is often labeled as a necessary tool to ensure the health of Wisconsin's ecosystem by, for example, culling the deer herd of weak animals with disease like CWD, or removing excessive numbers of deer harmful to forests.

Ask yourself if a wolf, the ultimate opportunist predator, will pass on fawns or

vulnerable bear cubs to take down a deer with CWD. Watch the video that On Wisconsin Outdoors will repost on our homepage of two wolves taking down a large adult buck. You will watch the death struggle typical to a wolf kill, and listen to the agonizing wailing of the prey prior to succumbing to the inevitable.

That is how wolves are made. The wolf, a beautiful animal with the hunting instincts necessary to survive harsh environments is to be admired for many reasons and welcome in Wisconsin in proper balance. He is a reliable predator. He is not an efficient or humane predator. Man is both, with the ability to immediately drop a deer with a well-placed round, and the logic to not take a shot unless the immediate kill is probable.

The wolf needs to be managed so that scientific, numbers-based management is not smothered by a "social science" survey approach that puts as much credence with animal rights activists and people scattered throughout the world as a family in Bayfield County or a rancher in Barron County. Or, hunters that traditionally hunt those areas of Wisconsin and support businesses there where deer numbers are now declining.

All of the attributes associated with the need for more wolves on Wisconsin's landscape in fact, can be better achieved by man. And it is the Wisconsin hunter too, that should be afforded the opportunity to have venison in the freezer come November. 🐾



9-18-2023 Bayfield County 11 Wolves



Wolf With Bear Cub 2017



10-18-2023 Oconto County 1 Wolf



7-8-2019 Wood County 6 Wolves



2-24-2022 Eastern Adams County 1 Wolf



11-28-2023 Iron County 2 Wolves



DICK ELLIS

Seeking Wolf Photos

OWO's informal census continues

On Wisconsin Outdoors' informal wolf census continues. Please send your trail cam photos, videos, or hand-held camera shots of wolves in Wisconsin to: wolves@onwisconsinoutdoors.com. List the county where the photos were taken, the date, and verify the number of wolves visible in each photo. Your name will not be published.

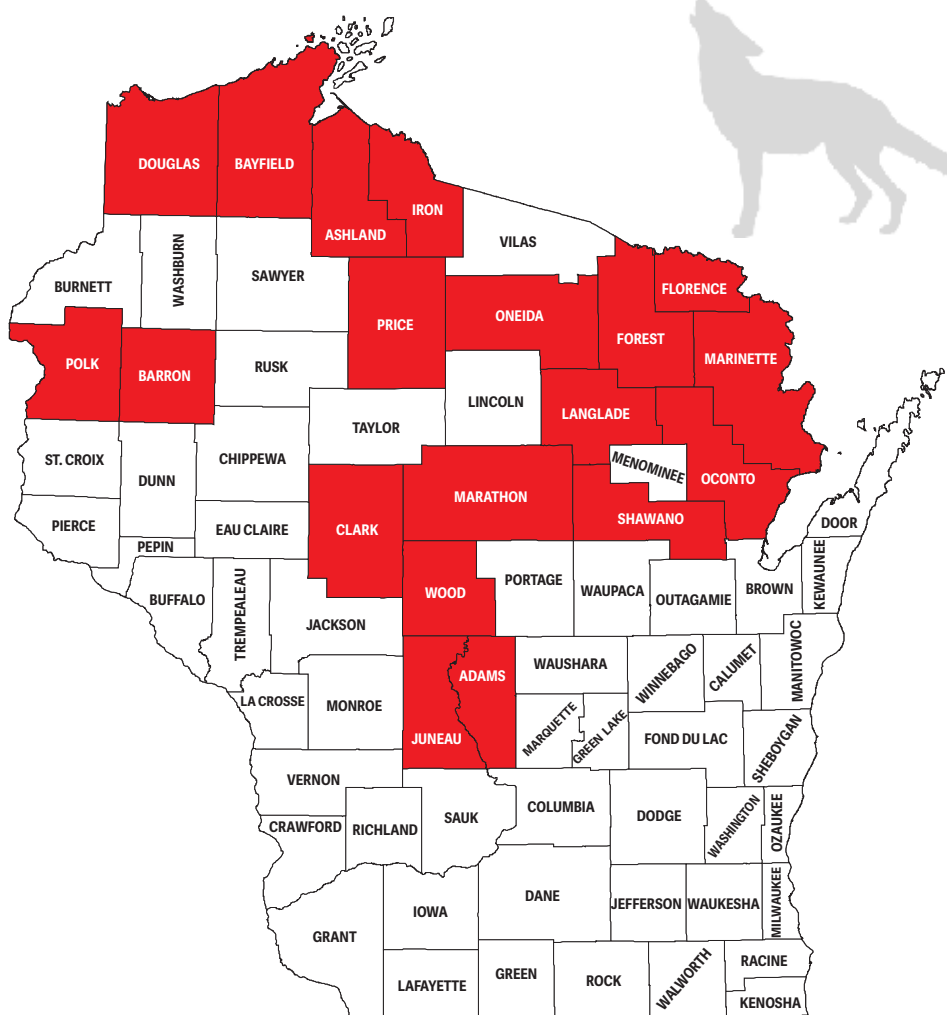
OWO publishers do not believe the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) population estimate that place wolf numbers in Wisconsin at 1007 animals during the winter of 2022/23. We do believe that an unmanaged wolf population in the state directly correlates with a severely declining deer hunting experience. We believe that the decline in our Wisconsin tradition will magnify further as individual wolves and wolf packs continue to expand to create an increasingly out-of-balance predator/prey ratio. Attacks on domestic pets and livestock, also will continue to increase.

By the numbers, since OWO asked for your trail cam photos of wolves, we have now published 23 photos from readers since January, 2024. This includes with this issue an additional six photos and 30 wolves from seven additional counties not previously represented with photos: Douglas, Polk, Ashland, Oneida, Marathon, and Marinette. The shots now include a total of 80 wolves scattered over 18 counties; Previously, we had published photos of 50 wolves collectively captured in photos received from Bayfield, Barron, Iron, Price, Clark, Wood, Adams, Juneau, Florence, Forest, Oconto and Shawano. In our ongoing project, red on the adjacent Wisconsin map will represent counties from which we have received wolf photos.

OWO will err toward the minimum number of wolves submitted by readers. For example, the Oneida County still shot of six wolves was taken from a submitted video with 12 - 14 wolves. In the Ashland County photo we named "Where's Waldo Wolf?" at OWO, we count nine wolves with help from a magnifying glass on the submitted jpeg. Others count 11 wolves.

To date, using the state mark of approximately 1000 wolves, with 23 snapshots taken over 25% of Wisconsin's 72 counties, we have in theory captured approximately 8% of the DNR's estimated population. The photo contributions represent only a literal snapshot of the vast territory within each of the 18 counties, with the large majority of Wisconsin counties not yet contributing a single photo to our informal survey. We're confident they will.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



10-22-23 Polk County four wolves.



3-5-24 Oneida County six wolves.



11-20-23 Ashland County nine wolves.



4-21-23 Marathon County two wolves entering Wausau.

WOLF PHOTOS, *FROM PAGE 19*

Did our readers to date capture more than 8% of the state wolf population from 23 tree mounts, videos, or handheld cameras, or are wolf numbers grossly underestimated?

Thank you for sending your trail cam photos of wolves, and for informing friends, local sports shop owners, shooting clubs or other possible sources that OWO is asking for photos that will help verify or challenge state population estimates. Healthy, science-based wildlife management is only possible with accurate numbers of predator and prey serving as the foundation for decisions.

Help us verify truth in numbers. Wherever it leads us. 🐾



1-3-21 Douglas County six wolves.



2-11-24 Marinette County one wolf.



12-6-23 Langlade County two wolves.

DICK ELLIS

Will Wolf Attacks on Domestic Pets Increase?

Loss of family dog leaves owners questioning management

The night of March 5, 2024 near Ashland Wisconsin, Julie Brilla let her 11-year-old labrador retriever, Cassi, out of the home to do her business. Within minutes, her husband John Brilla heard the dog bark in the backyard and Julie went to the door to let Cassi back in. There was no answer from the dog and she was nowhere to be seen.

They immediately called their son-in-law, Greg Martinsen, who arrived within 10 minutes on his Polaris ranger. What Greg found he described as “horrific.”

“The lab was lying dead and steaming in the field 100 feet from their house,” he wrote. “The dog was split wide open and the wolves had started eating her. I know there will be questions on whether it was truly wolves. I can say with 100 percent certainty it was.”

That fact was verified when the family took Cassi to Ashland, Martinsen said, and met with Ethan Rossing, a wolf specialist with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Rossing completed an examination confirming the wolf attack. This follows confirmed wolf attacks on pets, livestock and sporting dogs annually in Wisconsin where wolves are listed as endangered and not hunted, and recent DNR

wolf management practices opposed by many. DNR wolf population estimates are widely challenged as below reality, with the negative consequences already evident for hunters and largely undetermined for residents over much of Wisconsin.

“This experience should be seen as an eye opener for anyone with pets,” Martinsen said. “This didn’t happen in the middle of the national forest. This happened in their backyard. These wolves knew what they were doing and they made quick work of the family dog. Please take the time to call your state and federal legislators and demand some management of these killing machines. Thank you to Ethan Rossing from the USDA and Game Warden Phillip Brown for your professionalism during this tragic incident.”

“Some would say that this land is the wolf’s domain, but when they take a beloved, loyal companion, 50 feet from my house, they’re encroaching on my domain,” Julie Brilla wrote to OWO. “This was not a humane death. It was horrific. The deer population is way down in our area also, with many sightings of wolves. Hopefully, something can be done to better manage the wolf population, so we don’t have more of these terrible tragedies. Thank you.” 🐾



Cassi, an 11-year-old Labrador Retriever and family dog owned by Julie and John Brilla, was killed by wolves near Ashland after being briefly let out of the family home the night of February 5. The graphic photo is used per request of the owners who want other pet owners to be aware of the danger posed by wolves.

Truth in Numbers

The pursuit of hard wolf facts

According to Laurie Groskopf, who has served on various wolf committees representing wildlife and agriculture in the quest for accurate wolf population numbers, it appears that pet depredations or harassment are on the increase in 2024. Wolf conflicts posted on the DNR website span 2019 – 2024.

This year, there have been five pet dog predations or harassments reported and one pet miniature donkey mortality. This compares to a maximum in 2021 of three to this date, with the other years on the list showing one or two pet-wolf conflicts through April 5. She said there have been fewer hunting dog mortalities due to poor hunting or training conditions to date in 2024.

Rarely does DNR judge wolf conflicts as threats to human safety, a label which could result in lethal removal of wolves even when listed as an endangered species as is the case currently. DNR solicits tracking volunteers to assist with wolf population estimates. Groskopf is a volunteer tracker in three units, and noted the difficulty this winter in that endeavor due to the lack of snow.

“But on the days when I did track, I never had such an easy time finding wolf tracks,” she said. “It was incredible how many wolves were out there. If the estimate is done correctly, and there may be more issues than usual because of the lack of snow, I believe it will show more wolves than previous



Submitted by a resident of northern Wisconsin, these photos show one deer carcass in a campground during the winter of 2022. Five local deer were killed. A recurring theme, he said, is highly successful deer hunters in the same area who have not taken a shot in the last 10 years.

Sent by a resident of Bayfield County, a pack of at least three wolves feed on a cow kill.



years. They really need to expand the sources to detect wolf presence. Relying almost exclusively on ground tracking is not effective when wolf populations are this large and widespread.”

“These ground tracking surveys are very expensive since there are fewer volunteers like me, and most of the tracking is being done by paid DNR staff. The whole idea was to save money, yet get a better estimate. Neither of these goals have happened.”

For the Wisconsin Wolf Facts communication group, Groskopf said she is keeping track of each probable or confirmed wolf conflict, and sending USDA wildlife service reports to a number of contacts representing sporting and agricultural groups. Anyone suspecting a wolf conflict or harassment, Groskopf said, should immediately contact USDA Wildlife Services and leave a message. Connect with the USDA Northern Region at 1-800-228-1368. In southern or Central WI, call 1-800-433-0663. These numbers are only available for in-state calling. An investigator should contact the complainant within 48 hours. Take pictures and preserve the evidence if possible. Remove dead animals to an area where they will not be further fed on by predators.

An instant alert system also exists to notify people by email or text message about wolf conflicts. To find the two notification lists, click on the red envelope at the bottom of the DNR homepage where it states, “Updates.” A long list of notifications is available. Look for livestock depredation notification under the heading of “Announcements and News”. This list quickly sends notifications of livestock and per conflicts caused by wolves. The second instant notification can be found under the heading, “Wildlife Management.” Click on Gray Wolf Depredation Alert. This alert sends out information regarding hunting dog/wolf conflicts on public lands.

Generally, people within a four-mile radius of wolf conflicts should take extra precautions to avoid wolves. Wolf pack territories on average are 65 square miles. This advice may not be valid for lone wolves or dispersing packs.

Seeking “strength in numbers” Groskopf looks for truth by pursuing facts and intends to write informational pieces for the farm organization newsletters. “Unfortunately, many farmers do not belong to any organization, although they should,” she said. “With calving season coming up, these phone numbers can give livestock producers some information that may assist them in preventing problems as well.” 🐾

The Decline of Our Heritage

Perspectives of a Northern Wisconsin hunter

The date is Saturday, November 18, 2023 and the time is 11 am. I have just returned from an opening day Wisconsin deer hunt in Northern Bayfield County, to our cabin on Siskowit Lake about four miles south of Cornucopia, Wisconsin. Today marks my 58th year of hunting from this cabin, our “camp” established by my father shortly after he returned from World War II with the help of his father.

Family and friends who have enjoyed this traditional Thanksgiving week hunt over decades continue to make new memories that add to a wonderful history where new, young, hunters join older ones and the wondrous heritage continues. Over the years, the techniques and equipment have changed, and the quantities of the deer herd have gone both up and down. Older hunters have certainly seen this and are well aware of these fluctuations.

However, I am concerned about several things we are seeing in the field and how we now approach hunting. Technology, baiting, access to land, management principles, wolf populations, severe winter indexes, female deer quotas only begin to touch on these concerns. Can young hunters perceive hunting as a quality experience if they don't see a deer, let alone register one?

It is noteworthy that at noon on opening day, most of our 15 hunters had checked in and we had seen a total of three deer. We are covering approximately a 12-mile radius from where I write. The lack of deer sightings is not based on warm weather, lack of snow, waxing moon, rutting deer or any other factor. The deer are not



Better days. In the 1980s, Olson camp hunters capture a photo on Siskowit Lake with deer taken during the November gun season. Like many throughout Wisconsin, Bayfield County hunters hope tradition and heritage can be passed down despite a continued decline in deer numbers and the overall hunting experience.

here. We all utilize cameras that hunt 24 hours per day. My son spent 60-hours primarily bow hunting to see one small doe from a stand that has historically provided many deer over many years.

It is now January 10, 2024. The sentiment from so many other hunting groups that I have talked with is consistent with our own, and they are all voicing the same concerns; the season was again horrendous, and deer numbers virtually non-existent. Since the gun season, I have spent significant time driving back roads in our unique territory, often following snowfalls. Baiting deer with corn is done, and any expectation of seeing tracks as in the past as

deer move to find food sources is not to be. Wolf tracks, not deer, tell the story of what lives here.

Many people who love this area have significant investments in cabins. Of many reasons to be here, handing down our rich tradition of deer hunting remains prominent. We are not collectively angry. But we do know the people of Wisconsin can manage a better product. This is our heritage, from businesses that welcome and depend on the hunter, to our families and friends who appreciate venison on the plate.

Let's see what we can accomplish together.

BILL OLSON 🍷

PRESS RELEASE

Rep. Tiffany's Bipartisan Bill to Delist the Gray Wolf Passes the House

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Tom Tiffany (WI-07) and Congresswoman Lauren Boebert's (CO-03) bipartisan legislation to delist the gray wolf from the Endangered Species Act (ESA) passed the U.S. House by a vote of 209-205. H.R. 764, the Trust the Science Act, would remove the gray wolf from the list of federal endangered species, ensure that action is not subject to judicial review, and restore authority back to state lawmakers and state wildlife officials to control the gray wolf population.

“The science is clear; the gray wolf has met and exceeded recovery goals. Today's House passage represents an important first step towards restoring local control over the skyrocketing gray wolf population in Wisconsin. I will continue to fight to get this legislation through the U.S. Senate to protect livestock and pets from brutal wolf attacks,” said Congressman Tiffany.

Background:

There have been numerous gray wolf attacks in

Wisconsin's Seventh District over the last few years. You can view some examples here, here, and here (warning of graphic content). The Trust the Science Act requires the Secretary of Interior to reissue the 2020 Department of the Interior final rule that delisted gray wolves in the lower 48 United States and ensures that the reissuance of the final rule will not be subject to judicial review by activist judges like the California judge who vacated the rule in 2020 and unilaterally relisted the gray wolf by judicial fiat.

In 2020, the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delisted the gray wolf in the lower 48 United States through a process that included the best science and data available. At over 6,000 wolves at the time of delisting, the gray wolf has been the latest Endangered Species Act success story with significant population recoveries in the Rocky Mountains and western Great Lakes regions. However, despite ample scientific evidence of the gray wolf's recovery, a California judge unilaterally relisted the gray wolf under the ESA in 2022.

24 Members of Congress cosponsored Rep. Tiffany and Rep. Boebert's Trust the Science Act, including the entire Wisconsin Republican Congressional Delegation.

Groups that have supported the Trust the Science Act in the 117th Congress or the 118th Congress include: Alaska Farm Bureau Federation, BigGame Forever, Colorado Cattlemen's Association, Colorado Farm Bureau, Colorado Livestock Association, Colorado Wool Growers Association, House Committee on Natural Resources Republicans, Hunter Nation, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, IOTR-International Order of T. Roosevelt, Mid States Wool Growers Association, Minnesota Farm Bureau, Minnesota Lamb & Wool Producers Association, Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association, National Rifle Association (NRA), New Mexico Wool Growers Inc., Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Safari Club International (SCI), Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, Washington Farm Bureau, Washington State Hunter Heritage Council, Western Caucus, Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, and Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation.

DICK ELLIS

Seeking Wolf Photos

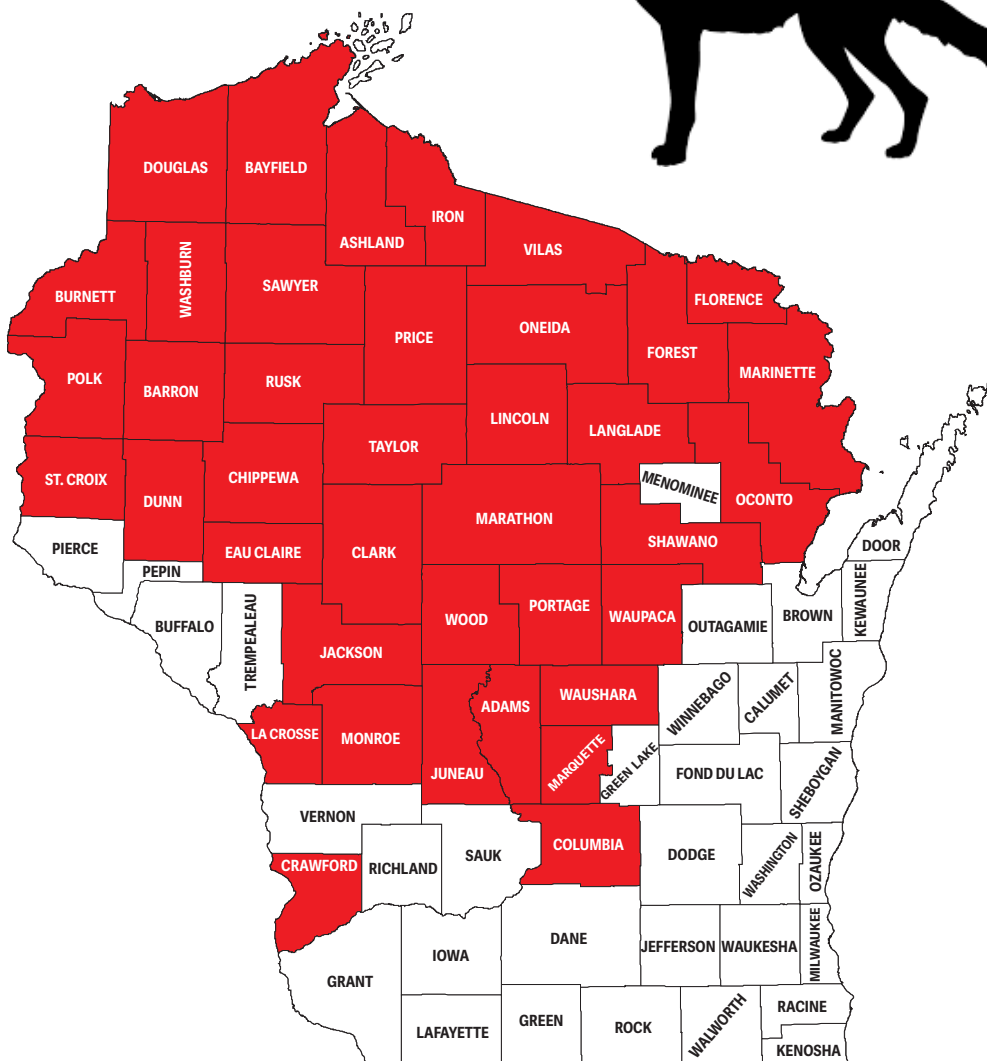
OWO's informal census continues

On Wisconsin Outdoors' informal wolf census continues. Please send your trail cam photos, videos, or hand-held camera shots of wolves in Wisconsin to: wolves@onwisconsinoutdoors.com. List the county where the photos were taken, the date, and verify the number of wolves visible in each photo. Your name will not be published without your permission.

OWO publishers do not believe the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) population estimate that place wolf numbers in Wisconsin at 1007 animals during the winter of 2022/23. We do believe that an unmanaged wolf population in the state directly correlates with a severely declining deer hunting experience. We believe that the decline in our Wisconsin tradition will magnify further as individual wolves and wolf packs continue to expand to create an increasingly out-of-balance predator/prey ratio. Attacks on domestic pets and livestock will continue to increase.

And we believe we are among the majority of Wisconsin deer hunters. After receiving a photo and email from Lincoln County hunter Tom Scharff, we asked for and received permission to publish his comments.

"I have four sons and a nephew who hunt our 130 acres with me," Scharff wrote. "Back 10 to 12 years ago we would each see 10 to 12 deer per day during the gun season and would as a



CONTINUED ON PAGE 24



WOLF PHOTOS, FROM PAGE 23

group harvest two to three deer a year. Now, we hardly see a deer at all. In the last three gun seasons, I have not seen a single deer.”

During the 2023 season, he said, only one hunter in the group of six saw deer (two does), with no deer harvested. In the past, the Scharff group would take thousands of deer photos per week from six trail cameras set on the property. The number of photos has declined to three to four per week, with no photos often being taken over several consecutive days.

Scharff said a neighbor who baits bear during the season also has cameras monitoring the bait sites. His photos show numerous photos per week showing wolf packs waiting for the bear to open the stations before chasing the bear off to consume the bait.

“This is out of control,” Scharff continued. “I think more sportsmen need to speak out. If everyone spoke out publicly who talks about the wolf problem privately, I believe it would bring a lot of attention to what may be ending our traditional deer hunting as we have known it. After gun hunting for over 50 years, this year may be the first time I don’t gun hunt. Having not seen a deer at all the last two years, it seems like a waste of time and certainly hard to get motivated for. I don’t necessarily need to shoot a deer, but if I am hunting all day, I would like to at least see some.”

By the numbers, since OWO asked for your trail cam photos of wolves we have now published 30 photos from readers since January, 2024. This includes with this issue an additional seven photos with wolves from four additional counties not previously represented with photos: St. Croix, Lincoln, Lacrosse and Sawyer. Shots published in this issue include photos from Clark and Ashland, counties which were represented with wolf shots in previous issues.



5-24-2024 Lincoln County 1 Wolf

The shots now include a total of 99 wolves scattered over 23 counties. In our ongoing project, red on the adjacent Wisconsin map will represent counties from which we have received wolf photos. We try to err on the side of low numbers. For example, photos came in from Lacrosse County that included shots with 2 wolves and 3 wolves. Because one photo had a collared wolf and one photo apparently did not with the photos taken one minute apart, we believe the pack includes at least 4 or 5 animals. Because our findings are not conclusive however, we use 3 wolves for our informal census.

To date, using the state mark of approximately 1000 wolves, with 30 snapshots taken over 31- percent of Wisconsin’s 72 counties, we have in theory captured approximately 9 percent of the DNR’s estimated population. The photo contributions represent only a literal snapshot of the vast territory within each of the 23 counties, with the large majority Wisconsin counties not yet contributing a single photo to our informal

survey. We’re confident they will.

Thank you for sending your trail cam photos of wolves, and for informing friends, local sports shop owners, shooting clubs or other possible sources that OWO is asking for photos that will help verify or challenge state population estimates. Healthy, science-based wildlife management is only possible with accurate numbers of predator and prey serving as the foundation for decisions.

Help us verify truth in numbers. Wherever it leads us.



7-8-2023 Lacrosse County 1 Wolf With Fawn



11-13-2023 Sawyer County 1 Wolf



4-10-2024 Lacrosse County 3 Wolves



DICK ELLIS

Seeking Wolf Photos

OWO's informal census continues

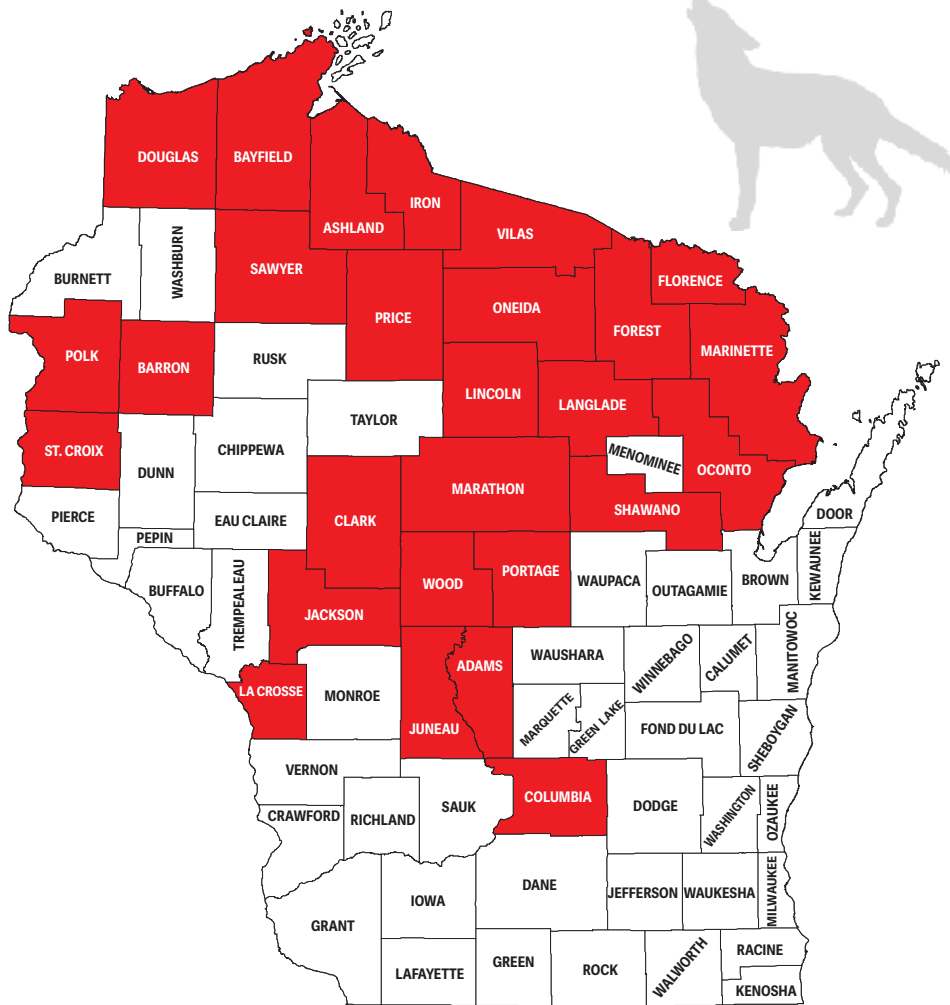
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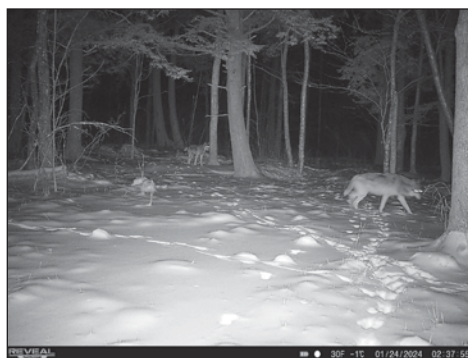
And we believe we are among the majority of Wisconsin deer hunters. This issue, the OWO publishers are turning for feedback from our eldest brother, Steve Ellis, who introduced us to hunting deer in Taylor County and helped build the family cabin in Vilas County before moving his growing family to hunt Iron County. In the last year, he purchased property in Clark County.

"For the past 23 years we've watched the wolf population increase and spread out across Wisconsin, and the deer hunting has become profoundly worse because of it," he wrote. "We have a real wolf problem, and the so-called authorities are not doing a thing to solve it. In 2001 we built a cabin in Iron County for the primary purposes of deer hunting. There were wolves around, but there were also a lot of deer. It seemed to work out fine.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



Sent by a resident of Bayfield County, a pack of at least three wolves feed on a cow kill.



1-24-2024 Lincoln County 2 Wolves



6-9-2024 Columbia County 1 Wolf



3-13-2015 Monroe County 1 Wolf



7-20-2024 Clark County 5 Wolves

WOLF CENSUS, FROM PAGE 25

"When I say 'a lot' of deer, the number was really pretty modest. I expected to see about six deer total during the nine-day gun season. One would be a buck; I'd get him and be happy. Over the next 20 years, that level of hunting became steadily worse as the wolf population increased. In the last four years in Iron County, I never saw a single deer, and my deer stands were literally overrun with wolf tracks.

"I ended up selling the cabin in 2023 and buying hunting land in Clark County. It broke my heart to do that, because we loved what it had been. But the wolves stole it, and it was gone. In Clark County, there are more deer now, but much to my disappointment, there is also a huge wolf population. Based on my experience, I know it won't be long until the deer hunting is over in Clark County, too. Already, the doe permits awarded each year seem to be decreasing. And don't even try to tell me it's not the wolves."

Steve Ellis sent us a photo for publication in this issue from his Clark County property taken on July 20, 2024 with five wolves on a deer kill with a probable sixth wolf in the background. As is our practice, we count the lower number when there is question.

By the numbers, since OWO asked for your trail cam photos of wolves, we have now published 38 photos from readers since January, 2024. This includes with this issue an additional 10 photos with wolves from five

additional counties not previously represented with photos: Monroe, Portage, Columbia, Vilas and Jackson. Shots published in this issue include photos from Lincoln, Price, Clark, Oneida and Adams counties which were represented with wolf shots in previous issues.

The shots now include a total of 106 wolves scattered over 27 counties. In our ongoing project, red on the adjacent Wisconsin map will represent counties from which we have received wolf photos.

To date, using the state mark of approximately 1000 wolves, with 28 snapshots taken over 31 percent of Wisconsin's 72 counties, we have in theory captured more than 10 percent of the DNR's estimated population. The photo contributions represent only a literal snapshot of the vast territory within each of the 27 counties, with the large majority of Wisconsin counties not yet contributing a single photo to our informal survey. We're confident they will.

Thank you for sending your trail cam photos of wolves, and for informing friends, local sports shop owners, shooting clubs or other possible sources that OWO is asking for photos that will help verify or challenge state population estimates. Healthy, science-based wildlife management is only possible with accurate numbers of predator and prey serving as the foundation for decisions.

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3-17-2024 Price County 4 Wolves



8-6-2024 Oneida County 6 Wolves



8-5-2024 Jackson County 1 Wolf



4-23-2024 Portage County 4 Wolves



8-18-2023 Adams County 2 Wolves



7-28-2024 Vilas County 1 Wolf

CONGRESSMAN TOM TIFFANY

President Trump Was Right to Delist The Wolf

In proper numbers, Gray Wolf is welcome in Wisconsin

Are you in a better position now than you were four years ago?

For many, the answer is a resounding no.

Because four years ago when President Trump left office, inflation was low, our border was secure, the world was less chaotic, and the average 30-year mortgage rate was 2.65%.

Fast forward to the present day, grocery

prices have surged by 21.2%, millions of illegals are overwhelming our border, a record 11 U.S. embassies have undergone evacuation, and the average 30-year mortgage rate stands at 7.36% under President Biden.

But that's not all.

Wisconsinites were also gearing up for their first wolf hunt since 2014, thanks to President Trump.

On October 29, 2020, after more than 45 years since gray wolves were first protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), President Trump's Department of the Interior removed the species from the ESA – citing its remarkable recovery with over 6,000 wolves in the U.S.

Following this delisting, Wisconsinites

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

Wolf Attacks on Pets, Livestock Increase

Loss of family dog leaves owners questioning management

The night of March 5, 2024 near Ashland Wisconsin, Julie Brilla let her 11-year-old Labrador retriever, Cassi, out of the home to do her business. Within minutes, her husband John Brilla heard the dog bark in the backyard and Julie went to the door to let Cassi back in. There was no answer from the dog and she was nowhere to be seen.

They immediately called their son-in-law, Greg Martinsen, who arrived within 10 minutes on his Polaris Ranger. What Greg found he described as “horrific.”

“The lab was lying dead and steaming in the field 100 feet from their house,” he wrote. “The dog was split wide open and the wolves had started eating her. I know there will be questions on whether it was truly wolves. I can say with 100 percent certainty it was.”

That fact was verified when the family took Cassi to Ashland, Martinsen said, and met with Ethan Rossing, a wolf specialist with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Rossing completed an examination confirming the wolf attack. This follows confirmed wolf attacks on pets, livestock and sporting dogs annually in Wisconsin where wolves are listed as endangered and not hunted,

and recent DNR wolf management practices opposed by many. DNR wolf population estimates are widely challenged as below reality, with the negative consequences already evident for hunters and largely undetermined for residents over much of Wisconsin.

“This experience should be seen as an eye opener for anyone with pets,” Martinsen said. “This didn’t happen in the middle of the national forest. This happened in their backyard. These wolves knew what they were doing and they made quick work of the family dog. Please take the time to call your state and federal legislators and demand some management of these killing machines. Thank you to Ethan Rossing from the USDA and Game Warden Phillip Brown for your professionalism during this tragic incident.”

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Cassi, an 11-year-old Labrador Retriever and family dog owned by Julie and John Brilla, was killed by wolves near Ashland after being briefly let out of the family home the night of February 5. The graphic photo is used per request of the owners who want other pet owners to be aware of the danger posed by wolves.

TIFFANY, FROM PAGE 26

conducted a successful wolf hunt to maintain population control while ensuring the wolves have a continued presence on the landscape.

Nonetheless, a year after Wisconsin’s effective wolf hunt, a California judge vacated the final 2020 rule thereby restoring ESA protections for the gray wolf across most of the United States.

It prompts the question: What expertise does a California judge have about the gray wolf population in Wisconsin?

Wisconsin farmers, ranchers, sportsmen, and pet owners have seen enough real-world evidence to know that it is their livelihood and future that’s endangered, not the gray wolf. Yet, radical environmental groups and judges have turned the ESA into a statutory

Hotel Californina, where animals check into the endangered species list, but they may never leave.

However, I’m working to change that. Alongside Congresswoman Boebert, I introduced H.R. 764, the Trust the Science Act. This bill aims not only to delist the gray wolf across the lower 48 states but also to shield the issuance of the final rule from judicial review.

This last aspect is crucial. It means that activist judges – like the one in California – wouldn’t have the authority to dictate how Wisconsinites manage their wolf population. Instead, the delisting would be safeguarded from judicial interference, allowing states to manage their gray wolf populations without fear of a relisting.

No one understands the gray wolf

population better than those who live among them, and it is high time we empower Wisconsinites to oversee our own wolf population.

President Trump was right to delist the gray wolf, and as his Secretary of Interior stated, “The gray wolf has exceeded all conservation goals for recovery... This species is neither a threatened nor endangered species.”

President Trump’s reelection is imperative to ensure we can finish the task of returning wolf management back to We the People.

Congressman Tom Tiffany was elected to represent Wisconsin’s Seventh District. The Trust the Science Act passed out of the House Natural Resources Committee and the House. The next step would be for the U.S. Senate to vote on it. 🐾

DICK ELLIS

Seeking Wolf Photos

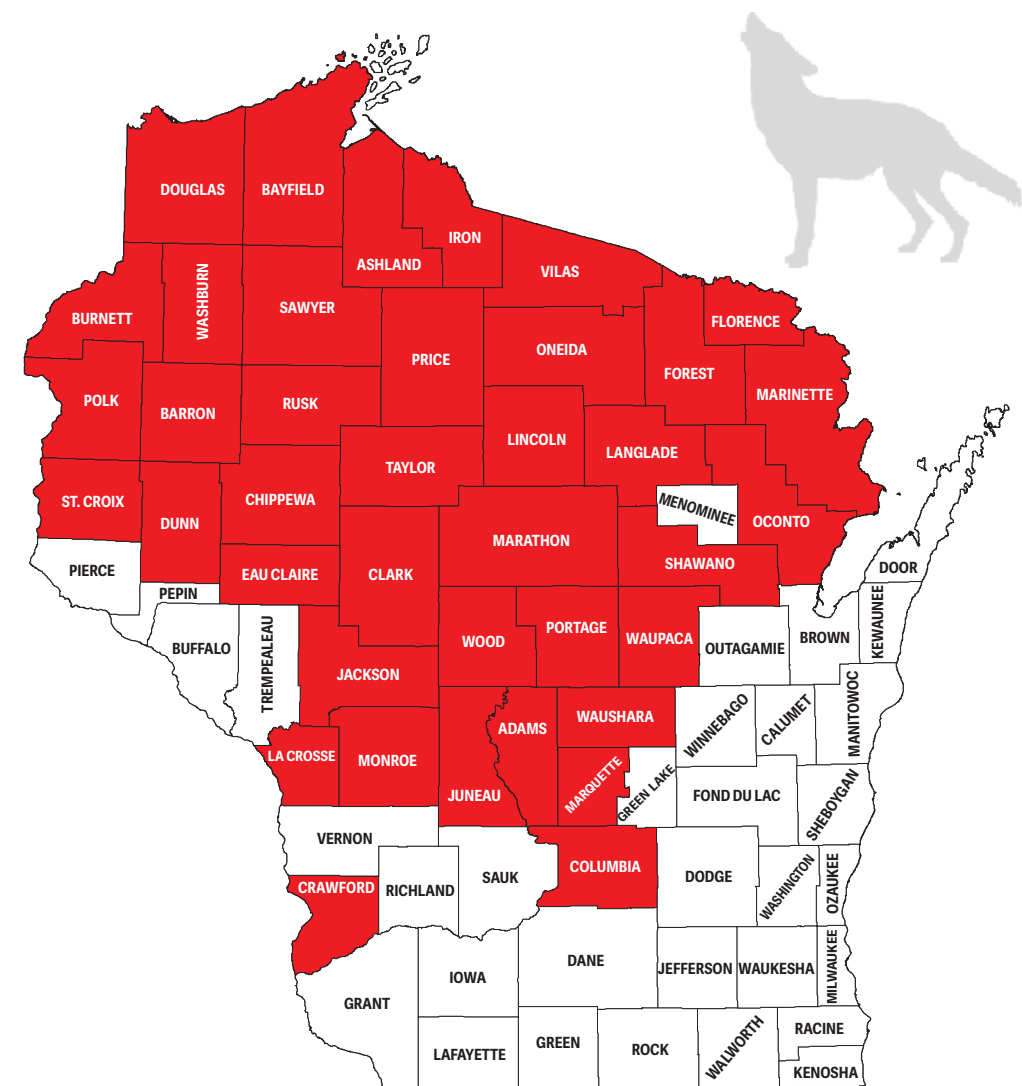
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OWO publishers strongly disagree with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) population estimate that place wolf numbers in Wisconsin at 1007 animals during the winter of 2022/23. We believe that an unmanaged wolf population in the state directly correlates with a severely declining deer hunting experience and that we are among the large majority of Wisconsin deer hunters. We believe that the decline in our Wisconsin tradition will magnify further as individual wolves and wolf packs continue to expand to create an increasingly out-of-balance predator/prey ratio.

And, in correlation with increasing and expanding wolf numbers, we believe that attacks on domestic pets and livestock will continue to increase. Of greatest concern, dangerous confrontations between wolves and humans will increase as a predator not being hunted loses its fear of man.

The wolf is welcome in Wisconsin in proper numbers and balance. He is also a vicious, robotic-like predator seeking only to survive that literally eats his prey alive. It's how he is made. By contrast, the large majority of Wisconsin hunters embrace logic in preparing for the hunt, including sighting in firearms to ensure a quick, humane kill and electing not to take the shot that does not offer that probability. By placing wolf over man, state wildlife managers and judicial radicals eliminate hunting traditions and



heritage, take away the opportunity for venison in freezers across our state, and invite slaughter to deer and other prey that even anti-hunters would not tolerate if they witnessed just one such kill.

By the numbers, since OWO asked for your trail cam photos of wolves, we have now

published approximately 120 photos from readers since January, 2024. This includes with this issue an additional 10 photos or DNR confirmation of depredation reports of wolves from 12 additional counties not previously represented: Burnett,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29



10-10-2024 Waupaca County 1 Wolf (Wolf Stalks Young Buck)



10-10-2024 Waupaca County 1 Wolf (Wolf Begins Attack at Groin)



10-10-2024 Waupaca County 1 Wolf (Wolf Continues Eating Buck Alive)

ELLIS, FROM PAGE 28

Washburn, Rusk, Taylor, Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire, Monroe, Crawford, Marquette, Waushara, and Waupaca. New photos submitted and published in this issue include photos from Eau Claire, Clark, Marquette, Waupaca, Marinette and Sawyer Counties.

To review depredation reports and maps on the DNR website as we did, connect with the website, and click on “Hunting” and the “Wolf” links. Visit “Confirmed and Probable Wolf Depredations” and “Verified Wolf Harassment and Threats” listed for the years 2019-2024.

OWO photos published or state verification of wolf depredation or threats now reflect activity in 39 of Wisconsin’s 72 counties. In our ongoing project, red on the adjacent Wisconsin map will represent counties from which we have received wolf photos or state verification of wolf activity.

To date, using the state mark of approximately 1000 wolves, with 120 snapshots taken from more than 54 percent of Wisconsin’s 72 counties, we have in theory captured 12 percent of the DNR’s estimated population. The photo contributions or state-evidence represent only a literal snapshot of the vast territory within each of the 39 counties, with 33 of Wisconsin counties not yet contributing a single photo to our informal survey. We’re confident they will, with the possible exception of counties in the far south.

Thank you for sending your trail cam photos of wolves, and for informing friends, local sports shop owners, shooting clubs or other possible sources that OWO is asking for photos that will help verify or challenge state population



9-21-2024 Wolf Killed By Waterfowl Hunter Protecting Group in Oneida County

estimates. Healthy, science-based wildlife management is only possible with accurate numbers of predator and prey serving as the foundation for decisions.

Help us verify truth in numbers. Wherever it leads us.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Hunter Cleared in Killing of Aggressive, Approaching Wolf

A 19-year old duck hunter accompanied by

13 and 14 year old friends was not charged with killing an aggressive wolf at approximately 10 yards distance opening day, September 21, while hunting the Wisconsin River north of the Sugar Camp Dam in Oneida County. An Open Records report requested by OWO from the DNR detailing the investigation conducted by Conservation Warden Tim Price was received October 25.

According to the report, the hunter constructed a ground blind with use of a deadfall on the shoreline and after first-shooting hours, encountered two wolves on shore. The 19-year old attempted to scare off the wolves by stomping his feet and clapping his hands. The first wolf began to quickly walk toward the three as a third wolf appeared five yards from the blind.

“The first wolf kept coming toward us (within 10 yards) and I quickly lifted my gun to protect the three of us,” the hunter states in the warden report. “As I shouldered my gun the wolf next to the blind took off and I simultaneously shot the first wolf which was about 10 yards from us.” The young hunter in the report states that he initially did not know if the animal approaching was a coyote or wolf, and that he had no intention of shooting until his group felt threatened and fearful.

Other witnesses including a hunter close to the incident interviewed by OWO stated another seven to 10 different wolves were in the area and that up to four packs frequent the area.

Following the investigation, the Oneida County and Federal district attorney offices will not press charges. 🐾



9-19-2023 Eau Claire County 3 Wolves



8-12-2024 Marinette County 1 Wolf (With Fawn Head in Mouth)



8-24-2024 Clark County 6 Wolves



8-30-2023 Eau Claire County 4 Wolves



9-06-2024 Marquette County 1 Wolf

DICK ELLIS

Seeking Wolf Photos

OWO's informal population census continues

On Wisconsin Outdoors' informal wolf population census will continue in detail with the March-April issue. Please send your trail cam photos, videos, or hand-held camera shots of wolves in Wisconsin to: wolves@onwisconsinoutdoors.com. List the county where the photos were taken, the date, and verify the number of wolves visible in each photo. Your name will not be published without your permission. As examples, among approximately 20 Wisconsin photos received by OWO since our November-December issue were the two trail camera shots each from Adams County received December 17 and published here.

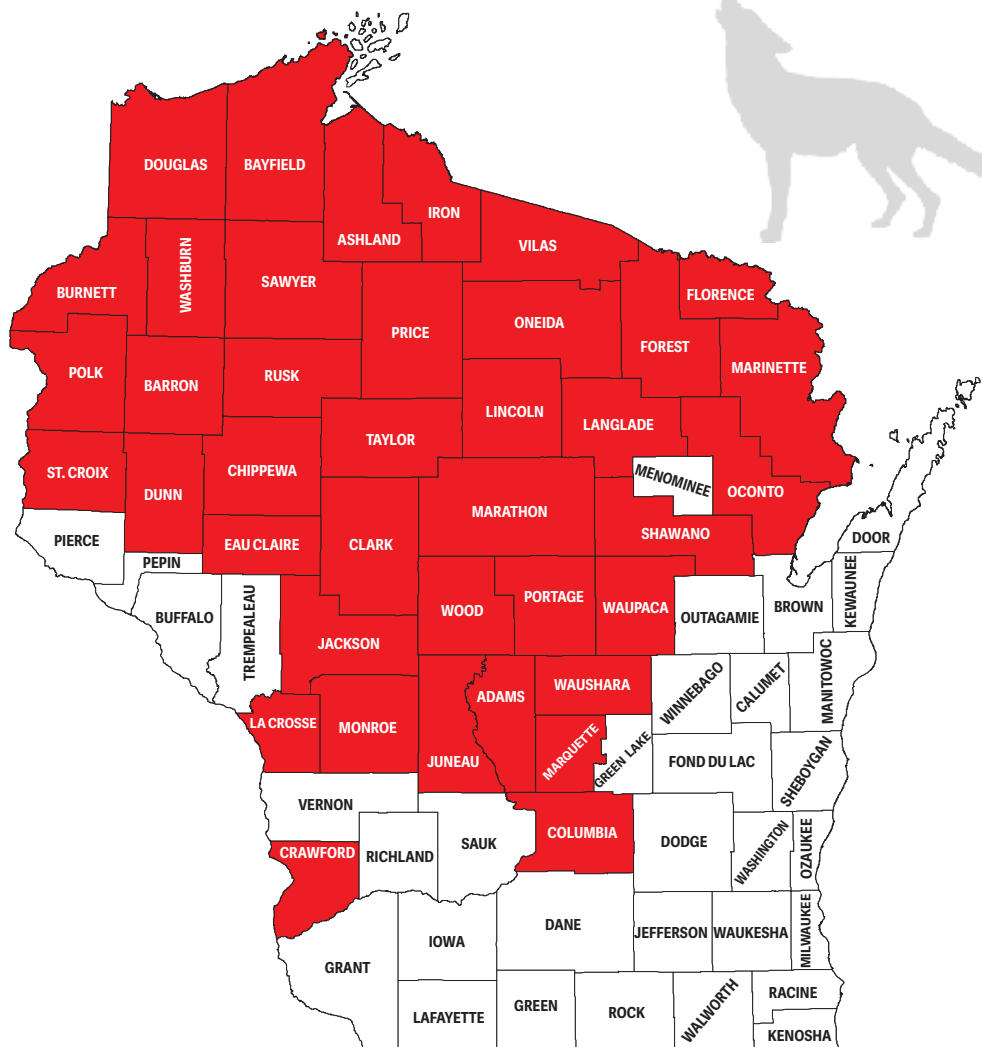
In the Wisconsin map below, red signifies counties from which we have received wolf photos, or have DNR-verified evidence of wolf depredation of livestock, pets, or sporting dogs.

OWO publishers strongly disagree with DNR population estimate that place wolf numbers in Wisconsin at approximately 1000 animals during the winter of 2022/23.


We believe that an unmanaged wolf population in the state directly correlates with a severely declining deer hunting experience. We believe that the decline in our Wisconsin tradition will magnify further as individual wolves and wolf packs continue to expand to create an increasingly out-of-balance predator/prey ratio.

Unsolicited by these publishers, perspectives of northern Wisconsin deer hunters following the 2024 November deer hunt can be read in this issue by OWO writers Dan Moericke and Bill Thornley. Moericke hunts in Eagle River in Vilas County. Thornley hunts near Spooner in Washburn County.

In correlation with increasing and expanding wolf numbers, we also believe that attacks on domestic pets and livestock will continue



to increase. Of greatest concern, dangerous confrontations between wolves and humans will increase as a predator not being hunted itself due to irrational and radical federal judicial decisions placing the wolf on the endangered species list loses fear of man.

OWO is currently investigating a verified, recent wolf-man encounter resulting in significant injuries to a Wisconsin trapper. In our November-December issue, we reported that a Wisconsin duck hunter was not charged in the killing of an aggressive approaching wolf on September 21 in Oneida County. 



10-8-2024 Adams County 5 Wolves



5-31-2024 Adams County 6 Wolves

Understanding the Northern Wisconsin Deer Herd

We have a large tract of land located 20 miles north of Ladysmith. It is all in one block and over time we have added 120 acres of food plots. We planted every crop imaginable, but our staple crops are soybeans, corn, alfalfa, kale and clover.

We had a live camera system (32 cameras) installed where we could watch many of the fields and crossings that record video on motion. We also had 24 Reconyx Trail Cameras set throughout the property, monitoring game trails, fields, etc. and each camera on motion would capture more than 2000 pictures each week.

In 2010 we started annually doing helicopter surveys of the property, to better understand the deer herd, winter habits, total deer count and predator population. In 2020 we decided to do helicopter surveys two to three times per month whenever there was snow on the ground.

Our focus during 2002-2018 was to harvest five and six-year-old 150-to-160-inch class bucks and kids were allowed to shoot any buck of any size. Many bucks had poor genetics and we made a significant effort to remove all cull bucks from the population. Every four-year-old buck and older we're named and we generally harvested 10 to 12 bucks per year of which two were usually the five and six-year-old, 150 -160-inch trophies. In order to keep the buck to doe ratio close we would sometimes harvest up to 40 does per year. In September we knew which deer survived the rifle and bow season and winter from the previous year. We would usually lose one or maybe two from the four to six-year-old buck class and normally had six to eight bucks in that age class.

Our first wolf pictures were in 2012 with three photos the entire year. From there it exploded and we now have thousands of photos each year of wolves, at times with four to five wolves in one photo. Since 2018 we have not harvested any buck over 130. Five- and six-year-old bucks today do not exist on our property. Today our bucks never make it past four years old and the doe count is so low we only harvest three-to-five per year for our Hunt of a Lifetime and youth hunts only.

Now I find myself sitting in the cabin looking at the 24 trophy, five-to-eight-year-old mature bucks on our wall and realize our whitetail traditions are gone and will never return. I have a close friend in Minocqua that owns 3000 acres and this year harvested one 125 inch, eight pointer. After a fresh snow he can't find a deer track on his property, but plenty of wolves. I



9-21-2012 Sawyer County 9 Wolves

have another close friend that owns 400 acres north of Loretta in the National Forest who over 30 years has harvested many trophy bucks but nothing in the last five years. He can no longer get his hunting partners to even come to his camp because there are no deer. There are many landowners and sportsmen in northern Wisconsin who are all experiencing this extreme change in the whitetail population.

Wolves have over time learned to adapt to varying conditions. They have refined their hunting skills and have become very efficient hunters, enjoying great success. They effectively have kills in the same locations night after night and year after year. They prefer bedding in swamps and very thick areas and will travel a great distance from their bedding area to their hunting area. When you first see wolves on your game cameras it will take them four-to-five years while they adapt and master how to effectively prey on deer in your area. At that point you will learn how clever and successful they become once they learn the whitetail habits.

Clearly no one understands our property like I do. Seeing what is on our property and around the northern part of the state, I believe we have more than 10,000 wolves in Wisconsin. The experts will tell you each wolf eats 20 deer per year. That's 200,000 deer per year just for

the wolves. Now they have convinced hunters to not harvest any does for the next four years because hunters harvested too many deer. I believe that will provide a greater food source for the wolves and increase the wolf populations which will further reduce the deer populations. Don't worry. They will hold hearings and offer public comment to again pacify the hunters who will continue accepting poor management plans. Wolves need to be controlled and every sportsman in the Northwoods understands that. The season needs to be reopened and realistic kill numbers need to be achieved. If the DNR believes there are a minimum of 1200 wolves in the state, open the season for one week statewide and I predict 1200 would be harvested. That would prove how unrealistic their current population estimates are.

Ultimately with a decreased deer population there will be less hunters. If I were a conspiracy theorist, I may say the less hunters in Wisconsin the less guns there are to control. It's just hard for me to believe the DNR is choosing to allow the wolves to decimate our deer herd which will ruin our Wisconsin deer hunting tradition. Can you imagine the economic loss to our state not to mention the camaraderie for all sportsman who enjoy the Whitetail Hunting Tradition? 🐾

DICK ELLIS

Seeking Wolf Photos

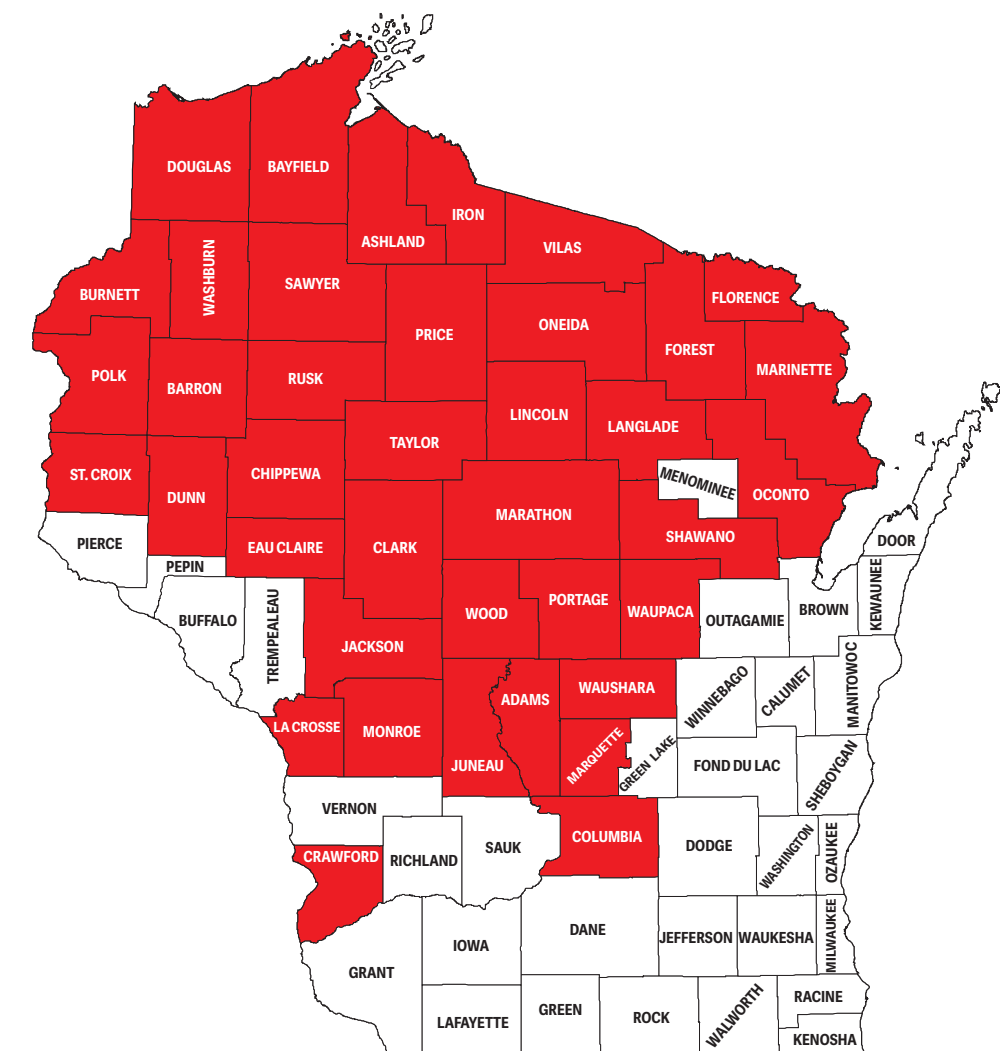
OWO's informal population census continues

On Wisconsin Outdoors' informal wolf census continues. Please send your trail cam photos, videos, or hand-held camera shots of wolves in Wisconsin to: wolves@onwisconsinoutdoors.com. List the county where the photos were taken, the date, and verify the number of wolves visible in each photo. Your name will not be published without your permission.

OWO publishers do not agree with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) population estimate that place wolf numbers in Wisconsin at 1007 animals during the winter of 2022/23. We do believe that an unmanaged wolf population in the state directly correlates with a severely declining deer hunting experience. We believe that the decline in our Wisconsin tradition will magnify further as individual wolves and wolf packs continue to expand to create an increasingly out-of-balance predator/prey ratio.

The DNR did not issue an over winter wolf population estimate for 2024, citing a high rate of failure in GPS tracking collars and lack of survey tracking snow last winter. The annual report is mandated by US Fish & Wildlife Services, but will not include the population estimate for the first time since Wisconsin began producing the summary in 1980.

In response to a OWO inquiry February 17, DNR Public Affairs Section Manager Molly Meister responded, "for the overwinter 2023-2024 monitoring period, the DNR observed atypical data in its winter tracking surveys, likely due to last winter's lack of snowfall. In addition, an unusual number of GPS collars on wolves experienced premature failure due to mechanical defects. These unexpected challenges have affected the data used to calculate the wolf population estimate; therefore, the DNR has not produced an overwinter wolf population estimate



for 2024".

According to DNR Wildlife Biologist Randy Johnson, about 90 wolves were live-captured and fitted with GPS collars over the past five years (in addition to a few dozen already on the air coming into 2020). Each collar is expected to last three-plus years, unless the animal is killed or a

malfunction occurs. Due primarily to a defect in the manufacturing process, he said, the majority of those collars failed prematurely and most of the collars that failed quit working in less than six months.

DNR reported 22 collars on the air for some portion of the monitoring period in



01-21-2025 Bayfield County 1 Wolf



3-20-2024 Langlade County 1 Wolf



1-25-2025 Oneida County 3 Wolves

winter 2022/23 and 21 on the air during the winter 2023/24. OWO is in correspondence with DNR to verify how many radio collars are currently working, and more importantly how do radio collars determine overall population estimates. If 90 animals were collared since 2020, is the state saying they were able to capture almost 10 percent of their most recent population estimate of just over 1000 wolves? Where, specifically, were the wolves captured?

Regarding OWO's informal survey, readers from six counties submitted photos for this issue, with some shots published here as space allowed. This issue, we publish the story of a trapper who sustained serious injuries when approaching a wolf trapped while targeting bobcat. We are not calling this a wolf "attack", but an "encounter". A cornered predator will respond as this animal did. But, with increases in wolf predation of sporting dogs, livestock, pets, and the defensive killing by a duck hunter of an approaching wolf in October, the incident serves as another reason to question state estimates of wolf numbers. And the trapper, participating in a legal, Wisconsin sanctioned sport, also wanted to warn other trappers to be wary when approaching a trap.

Thank you for sending your photos that will help verify or challenge state population estimates. Healthy, science-based wildlife management is only possible with accurate numbers of predator and prey serving as the foundation for decisions. Help us verify truth in numbers. Wherever it leads us. 🐾



10-24-2024 Vilas County 1 Wolf



11-30-2024 Sawyer County 2 Wolves



10-4-2019 Juneau County 4 Wolves

TODD WOIDA

Wolf Encounter in Marinette County

An email to On Wisconsin Outdoors in October briefly detailed an encounter between Marinette County grouse hunter Todd Woida, his dog Mocha, and wolves that had just killed a deer before venturing too close to the hunters for comfort.

"I appreciate you and your efforts in keeping pressure on this critical issue," Woida wrote. "On Sunday, October 6th, 2024, at about 8:15 am I took my dog, Mocha, on a brief grouse hunt out at my place in Amberg, Wisconsin. As we were about 80 yards out the back door, I heard what could only be described as a lamb going to slaughter. These bleats of agony were accompanied by steps I interpreted as steps coming up the trail towards the dog and me."

With Mocha held by the collar, Woida shouted at the approaching wolves and immediately returned to the cottage to put the dog away before setting back out to investigate further. Within 30 minutes, he discovered the point of the deer kill scene that almost all hunters will eventually relate to who hunt in wolf country. He also sent OWO photos of wolves at the same time and in the territory of the kill.

"I also have a game camera as part of the Wisconsin DNR "Snapshot" program," Woida continued. "I enclosed a picture clearly indicating that two wolves were on camera at 8:03 am on October 6, 2024, heading in the direction of the kill I heard about 8:20 am. The additional pictures are zoomed in pictures of each wolf as they passed the camera."

"I feel like Mocha and I dodged a bullet on this one. There were also three other dogs up at my place and it was the busiest weekend of the year for me. They knew we were there-they simply didn't care." 🐾



8-21-2024 Marinette County 4 Wolves

STORY BY: KEN DAMVELD (BASED ON TRUE EVENTS) • WRITTEN BY: HOLLY WEATHERWAX (DAUGHTER)
EDITED BY: STACIE ROBBINS (DAUGHTER)

Trappers Beware

Injured in wolf encounter, Wisconsin trapper questions population numbers

I'm a longtime hunter and trapper but first-time bobcat hunter. A few years back, my daughter had a bobcat tag. She didn't have any luck during her season but was able to call a bobcat in coyote hunting with her husband. I was able to get permission to trap bobcat on that same land. My son-in-law and I went to set traps and the landowner confirmed he was still getting pictures of bobcats on the property. We set Ridger 4 coil #3s with outside lamination and used Caven's Hiawatha Valley Predator Bait. I was confident in my chances.

A cold crisp November day checking traps on my own farm started great with a red fox taken before I headed to check the bobcat traps I had set on the property where I had been given permission. Approaching the first set of traps with .22 rifle in hand, I saw a tail flip in the tall grass and thought I must have caught a coyote. I cautiously approached the canine with my gun pointed at him.

With a closer view, I was not certain if I had caught a coyote or wolf.

The moment the animal let out a bone-chilling, hair raising howl I knew it was in fact a wolf. In an instant, the wolf lunged, slipped out of the trap and grabbed my forearm. He shook my arm, then let go and ran away. My arm was on fire! There was no tear in my Carhart jacket but blood was running down my arm. Without my phone, I quickly walked back to the truck and drove 20 minutes home.

At the house and still in shock from the encounter, I went to pull my arm out of my jacket sleeve and blood came rolling out. The injury was severe and worse than I thought. I wrapped my arm with a towel and drove to the ER. The wolf's upper jaw had ripped my forearm muscle in half, exposing the tendons. The lower jaw had ripped open the bottom of my arm, but not nearly as bad as the top of my forearm. The doctor said I was lucky and it could have been much worse. They stitched me up and started a series of rabies shots.

I then had to schedule an appointment with a specialist to see if reconstructive surgery was needed to repair the tendons. At that appointment, they informed me there was no way to stitch the muscle back together and I would have to just let it heal. I was lucky that the tendons



Trapper Ken Damveld received severe arm wounds through a heavy coat when a trapped wolf he approached while targeting Bobcat escaped. were not damaged and no surgery was necessary. After almost 2 months, it has healed up pretty well but it is going to leave a nasty scar.

Never in my life did I think something like this could have happened to me. I am thankful everything is healing, and the wolf wasn't able to knock me down and do more damage.

I would warn trappers to be on extreme alert when checking traps. You never know what you will run into. I believe there are more wolves out there than we realize. 🐾