



GETTING TO KNOW OUR WOLVES!*



Wolves are amazing animals! You probably know something about them from fairy tales like “Little Red Riding Hood” or “The Three Little Pigs.” In those stories, wolves act like scary and evil creatures. In other folk tales wolves look silly, helpful and even wise. Are wolves misunderstood? Are they dangerous? What problems are there from learning about wolves from fairy tales? What are they really like?



A good way to understand wolves is to learn more about them—

not from fairy tales, but from scientific research.

Let's begin our fact finding mission about wolves now!

Wolf Classification

Some important details about wolves are that they are mammals (like cats, deer, dolphins, and people) and they are carnivores—a group of mammals that eat meat. They belong to the dog family called “Canidae,” which also includes coyotes, jackals, foxes, dingoes, and the domestic dog. Wild canids in North America are wolves, foxes, and coyotes.

Did you know?? When a member of the pack dies, wolves have been heard to howl a very sad-sounding howl. They have been seen to mourn for 6 weeks.

Fun fact: Wolves can eat about 20% of their body weight in one meal!! If you weigh 100 pounds, you would have to eat 20 pounds of food at one meal to be like a wolf - that's like eating 80 quarter-pound burgers in one sitting!

Lots of Facts

Urgekgu< There is only one species of wolf in North America. "Ecpku"nwrwu0 Its common name is "grey wolf."

Eqnqtu: Grey wolves are not only grey. They can also be black, reddish brown, and white. Wolves in the Arctic are white. This helps them be camouflaged in the snow.



Weight and Height:

Average length (tip of nose to tip of tail): 4.5 - 6.5 feet
Average height: (at the shoulder) 26—32 inches
Average weight: 60-80 pounds (female) & 70-100 pounds (male)

Life Span: Wolves can live up to 13 years in the wild, but their average life span is 6-8 years.

Speed: They can run for short distances at speeds of about 35 miles per hour.

Number: As of Dec., 2013, there were 64 confirmed wolves in Oregon - living in 8 packs. Since then, a lone wolf, OR7, found a mate! and had three pups in SW Oregon.



* Partially compiled from “Dialogue for Kids—Wolf Facts” - Idaho Public Television

Range: In the 1800's, gray wolves ranged all over North America. Human settlers competed with wolves for the elk, deer, bison and moose that wolves needed and they began raising sheep and cattle. Sometimes the wolves turned to domestic livestock for food. In the late 1800's, wolves were eliminated from most of the lower 48 states by shooting, trapping and poisoning.

Today in America, most wolves live in Alaska, Idaho, Minnesota, Michigan, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

Habitat: Gray wolves can live in most environments, including alpine areas and the tundra, but are usually found in forests. A large pack's home range or territory can vary from 100 square miles to 1200 or more square miles. It all depends largely on how much prey live close by.



Did you know?? Under ideal conditions, wolf howls can be heard as far away as 6 miles!

All about packs: Wolves are highly intelligent and are very social animals. They live in packs. The pack is the wolf's family. Ideally, this includes the parents or breeding pair, juvenile wolves which are the parent's offspring and young pups. Sometimes unrelated wolves are part of the pack as well. All members of the pack help to raise the pups that are born in April or May. Average pack size is 5—11 wolves.

The breeding pair is the alpha male and female. They are the leaders of the pack. The pack works together when hunting for food, feeding the pups, and defending their territory. Within their pack, wolves are usually very loyal and affectionate.



Food and Hunting: Wolves are carnivores and normally eat large ungulates such as deer, elk, moose, caribou and big horn sheep. To bring down such large prey, they must hunt together in their pack. Sometimes they eat smaller animals like rabbits, beavers, voles, and ground squirrels. Gray wolves, as a top predator, are a key component to the food web and play an important role helping to maintain a natural balance in the landscape. For example, when wolves were re-introduced to Yellowstone National Park, they preyed on the elk, who were browsing heavily on trees and shrubs. Now the elk changed their behavior and decreased in number, giving the aspen and cottonwood a chance to grow. These plants could now shade the river—so fish, beaver and frogs increased—along with songbirds who needed the trees. All because the wolf returned!

Wolf Pups: Baby wolves get a lot of loving care—they are well fed, cleaned and protected. The pups leave the den when they are 4 weeks old, but stay nearby. When the mother goes hunting, another member of the pack “baby-sits”. At about 7–8 months, the pups begin traveling with the pack to learn how to hunt.



They love to play with their brothers and sisters, stalking and pouncing on each other. The skills they learn by playing help them to be good hunters.

Did you know?? A wolf's nose is so sensitive that it can smell prey that is more than a mile away!

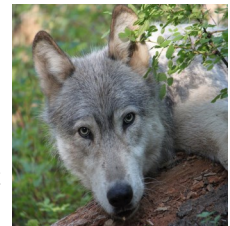
Body language: Wolves use body language to show other wolves how they feel about things.

To show :

- Anger: a wolf may stick its ears straight up and bare its teeth.
- Suspicion: the wolf may pull the ears back and squint.
- Fear: the wolf may flatten its ears against its head.

Have you ever seen similar body language in your pet dog?

Tail tales: The rank of a wolf in the dominance order of the pack can be seen in the way it carries its tail. A more dominant wolf carries its tail high. A less dominant wolf carries it low.



Are wolves a threat to people? Even though wolves are social among themselves, they avoid human contact. Wolf-human conflicts are extremely rare. Problems can occur when wolves get used to people, when dogs are involved or if the wolf is sick. (<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/Wolves/faq.asp>)

Remember that while wolves are beautiful and are especially cute and cuddly as a puppy, it is never a good idea to try to tame any wild animal. Let's help keep them all safe and wild!