

The Truth About Those Canadian Wolf "Re"introductions

(Note: Please see asterisk below for the inspiration for this gem of a rebuttal.)

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Today's Bozeman Daily Chronicle guest column space* occupied by the Greater Yellowstone Coalition's Michael Scott, is rife with factually unsupportable claims and deserves an evenhanded response.

Many readers are interested in seeing the facts set straight. The question remains whether the Bozeman Daily Chronicle will continue to print propaganda by the likes of Norm Bishop and Michael Scott -- thus perpetuating a one-sided position on the topic -- or open up the dialogue to opposing views.

Weak reporting about ranchers who complain that they are losing livestock to an exploding wolf population doesn't represent reasonable 'balance.'

Michael Scott, paid advocate of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, wrote a column rife with error. He began, "In the early 1990s, before the first Rocky Mountain gray wolf set foot in Yellowstone after a 60-year absence ..."

Those familiar with the "wolf re-introduction" plan know:

(1) The wolves dropped into Yellowstone Park were not Rocky Mountain wolves, known in the scientific community as *Canis Lupus Irremotus*, a smaller animal that hunted in pairs and was the indigenous species in the Yellowstone Ecosystem. Rather, **they were the Canadian Grey Wolf, a super sized predator hunting in super sized packs that evolved to chase caribou herds for hundreds of miles.**

(2) Federal implementation of wolf introduction has violated the Endangered Species act (ESA) on virtually every count. Dr. Richard Mitchell, PhD., one of the original authors of the ESA, traveled from Washington, D.C., on January 11, 2000, to testify in Billings [Montana] at the Predator Management Symposium. Dr. Mitchell stated to an audience of several hundred, including Sen. Conrad Burns, that it was a violation of the ESA to dump the Canadian Grey[wolf] on top of the Rocky Mountain wolf.

(3) The Rocky Mountain wolf didn't need to be 're-introduced' -- because it was already there. Locals testified at the aforementioned event to having seen the native wolf in and around the park prior to the "soft" introduction of this "experimental-non essential" predator that was already migrating into Montana naturally from Canada.

(4) **The true number of wolves in the park today exceeds Scott's quoted number of 130 -- many times over.** A recent census count of wolves has just been performed. Why haven't those results been made public? Under threat of perjury -- and in accordance with Title 18 of the U.S. code -- would [the following]: Yellowstone Superintendent, Suzanne Lewis and her two associates, [who are] responsible for the wolf program, Glen Plum and Doug Smith -- affix their signatures to a formal public document confirming the most recent wolf census in Yellowstone National Park?

Curt Alt of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, has stated that we "have some of the highest wolf densities in North America," rivaling those present among the Porcupine Caribou Herd in Alaska!

If that is the case, we truly have another super-size bureaucratic mess of a program that has gone horribly wrong.

A super majority in three state legislatures opposed wolf introduction -- prior to the animals being foisted upon our states and us. Never was a "deal" struck. "Deals" require offers and acceptance.

An "I told you so" is weak recompense for those whose economic and private property rights have been negatively impacted by a nefarious agenda.

*<http://www.dailychronicle.com/articles/2005/01/29/opinions/1wolves.txt>

Let's fulfill our part of the wolf-reintroduction bargain

January 29, 2005

By Michael Scott, Guest Columnist [gyc@greateryellowstone.org or 406-586-1593]

In the early 1990s, before the first Rocky Mountain gray wolf set foot in Yellowstone National Park after a 60-year absence, a broad range of individuals and organizations struck a deal that promised to restore *Canis lupus* to the western landscape. The deal took into consideration the legitimate concerns of ranchers, hunters and outfitters who feared their livelihoods would be threatened. The agreement said that, once there were enough wolves for a biologically sound population, and when Montana, Idaho and Wyoming came up with reasonable wolf management plans, wolves would be removed from the federal endangered species list and management would be turned over to the states.

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone National Park, I am pleased to say that we have made great strides toward that goal. In doing so, we are writing what eventually could be the greatest wildlife restoration success story in our nation's history. From those first 14 Canadian wolves that were transplanted into the Lamar Valley back in January 1995, we now have a population of about 170 wolves in Yellowstone National Park and another 130 wolves roaming throughout the Greater Yellowstone region. In a scenario that was hard to imagine just a decade ago, wolf sightings are now fairly

common in such places as Paradise Valley, Madison Valley and the upper Gallatin River drainage. If we work together as a region, we can finish writing that success story.

The key to finishing the deal and removing wolves from the endangered species list lies in how the three states manage them. Montana and Idaho have produced wolf management plans that have been accepted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and as a result, have recently been given added flexibility to manage wolves. In return, the states and their citizens must demonstrate their commitment to treating wolves as a valued wildlife species instead of vermin.

If Montana's and Idaho's wildlife managers strike a measured balance between maintaining big game numbers and ensuring that wolves are allowed to roam the countryside, then we can reach the goal of delisting wolves in the near future. Evidence that wolves are reducing big game numbers in a specific area should not, however, automatically trigger a death sentence.

As part of a healthy, functioning ecosystem, wolves eat prey, and anywhere wolves take up residence, elk and deer herds will almost certainly be affected.

If, on the other hand, there is concrete evidence that wolves are sharply reducing herd numbers, it will be up to wildlife managers to strike a balance.

Likewise, Montana and Idaho ranchers are being given broad new authority to control wolves that are preying on livestock. They, too, must exercise that authority wisely if we are going to reach the goal of delisting wolves.

It's too bad Wyoming didn't follow its neighbors' lead. Wyoming has chosen to sue the government rather than rewrite its wolf management plan, which thumbs its nose at the original balanced agreement for wolf reintroduction by allowing an open season on them, except within the protective confines of national parks and wilderness areas. That obstinacy is inhibiting our progress toward delisting wolves.

When Wyoming writes an acceptable plan, and when the three states demonstrate they will manage wolves responsibly as part of the region's wildlife, we will support removing wolves from the endangered species list. After all, that's part of the deal we made before the first wolves were restored to Yellowstone a decade ago. And when we make a deal, we stand by it.

----- Michael Scott is executive director of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, based in Bozeman.

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