

6 July 2017

Wild Wolves

Program Overview

Note: The hunting scenes in this program are very graphic. You should preview the program to determine the appropriateness for your classroom.

The relationship between wolves and humans is long and complex. Although ancient wolves are the ancestors of today's domesticated dogs, over time wolves have come to be seen as violent predators. In the United States, changing laws over the past 80 years demonstrate the wide range of opinions about wolves. Ranchers, environmentalists, residents, and government officials have been involved in ongoing disputes over the question of whether and where wolves should be allowed to roam. This NOVA program profiles the wolf's diet, habitat, and hunting behavior and examines the connection between wolves and human culture.

Viewing Ideas

For watching *Wild Wolves*

Before Watching

1. Have students do a five-minute "free-write" in which they write and draw everything they know about wolves. Encourage students to brainstorm freely so that they will record the first images that come to mind when they think of wolves. Their ideas might include wolf behavior, habitat, and prey, as well as stereotypical images of wolves or how wolves are portrayed in literature and popular culture. Talk with students about how some of the portrayals might have originated and review the role of the wolf as a top predator and its role in the balance of nature. As they watch, have students look for information that confirms or contradicts their previewing descriptions.

After Watching

1. Revisit students' ideas about wolves. What else would they add now?

Classroom Activity

[Materials](#) | [Procedure](#) | [Activity Answer](#)

Objective

To analyze some of the social and political aspects of wolf relocation.

MATERIALS for each team -----

- copy of the student handouts
Relocation Challenge ([PDF](#) or [HTML](#))
Wolf Facts ([PDF](#) or [HTML](#))
- penny

PROCEDURE -----

1. Re-introducing wolves into an area is a complicated issue. Analyze some of the social and political aspects of wolf relocation in this activity.
2. Divide the class into small teams, and distribute the "Relocation Challenge" and "Wolf Facts" student handouts, and a penny to each team.
3. In Part I, have students select and defend their choice for relocating a pack of wolves to a fictitious site.
4. In Part II, have students flip a coin to see what happens next to the wolf pack and make a recommendation for solving the issues that arise. Students should support their choices and consider how different parties who might be impacted by the decision—government officials, environmentalists, residents, and ranchers—would react. They should also consider what additional information they would need to make the most complete decision and where they could obtain it.

ACTIVITY ANSWER-----

Relocation Challenge

Part I

Students should consider the possibilities for feeding as well as for establishing a natural territory in each site. Each location has benefits and drawbacks. Site 1 offers good potential for prey and a somewhat isolated territory. The possibility of human contact, however, might cause the wolves to move further away from the site, possibly closer to populated areas. Site 2 offers isolation, but might not provide enough food, which would cause them to travel in search of prey. Site 3 offers a plentiful food source, but regular visits by people and the possibility of livestock kills on the nearby grazing land could pose problems.

Part II

Scenario A: The description of the calf carcass does not indicate that it was definitely killed by a wolf, although Wolf 3's presence in the area makes him a good suspect. Since he has already attacked livestock, officials might decide to relocate him to a more remote area. He could also be taken back to the holding pen for a period of time to help him lose his instinct to wander. Although it is not known whether Wolf 3 actually killed the calf, officials might assume he did and shoot him based on the Endangered Species Act two-strike policy. Alternately, it might be argued that the animal should be left alone unless it is proven that he is killing livestock. However, some ranchers might want the wolf removed from the area. Other people, including wolf supporters, might recommend moving him in an attempt to keep the wolf population amicably separated from people.

Scenario B: Wolf 6 may not be able to feed her pups without a mate. Before taking any action, officials should probably observe the wolf family to see how they are faring. Since the wolf relocation program intends for wolves to re-populate the area as naturally as possible, there is a strong case to be made for leaving the wolves alone, with the understanding that some animals may die in the process of repopulating the park. This may be a difficult option for students to consider, but they should talk through the reasons for not taking steps to artificially control the population. An intermediate step is for wildlife officials to leave meat within easy reach of the female so that she can keep her pups fed without having to spend too much time hunting. In this way, the wolves can remain in the wild, but be given a higher chance of survival. The greatest intervention would be to capture the entire family and bring them back to the pens until the pups are able to survive on their own. The reasoning for this course of action is that since the entire re-population program is experimental, researchers might have to take extraordinary steps to ensure its success at the beginning.

Relocation Challenge



You have been chosen to serve on the Wolf Relocation Team for placement of Canadian grey wolves in the Granite River National Forest, a fictitious park located in the western region of the United States. In an effort to bring the wolves back to their former habitat, a pack of nine wolves (identified as 1 through 9) has been trapped in Canada for release in this region.

Materials for each team

- Wolf Facts sheet
- penny

Part I

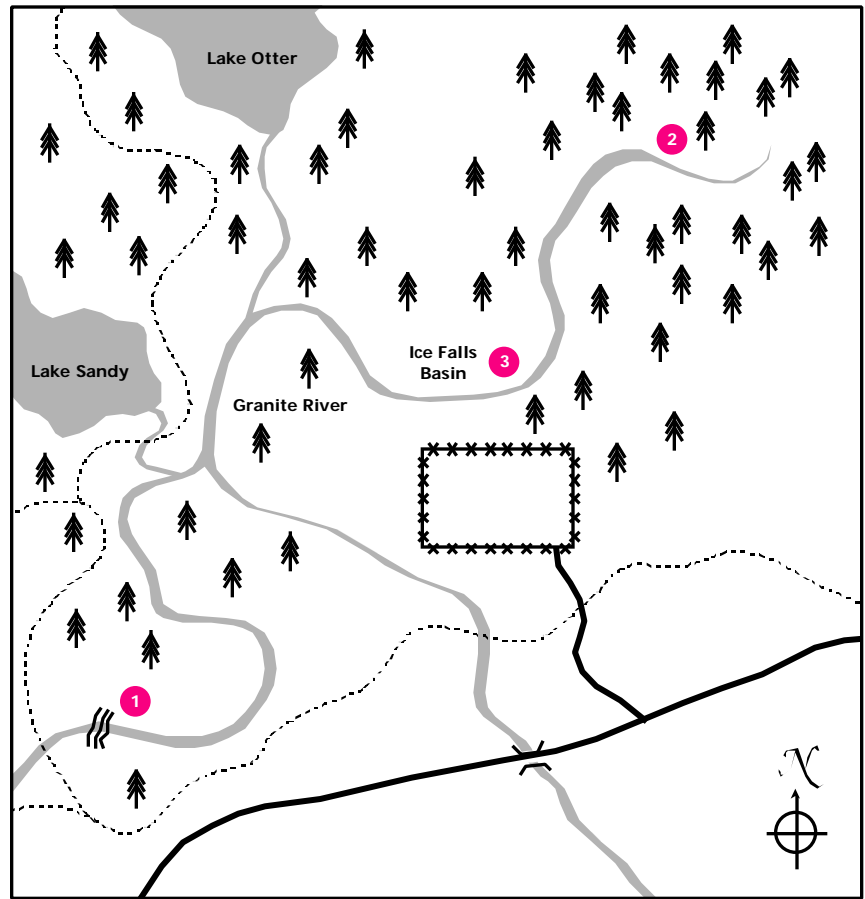
After a 10-week holding period to help the grey wolves adjust to their new surroundings, they can be released in one of three spots in the National Forest. Which location seems most appropriate to your team? Give your reasons for the selection. Refer to the Wolf Facts sheet for information to help you make your decision.

Site 1 On the western side of the park, 11 km (7 mi) from the nearest dirt road but within half a kilometer (third of a mile) of a waterfall that is a favorite hiking destination in the summer. Herds of elk have been grazing in the open fields less than 3 km (1.8 mi) away.

Site 2 Near the headwaters of the Granite River in a remote area of the National Forest. The area is rocky and infrequently visited by people. Bison and elk occasionally come to drink along the riverbed.

Site 3 The Ice Falls Basin area, deep in the river valley. Snowmobile riders travel across the area often, but it is more than 160 km (100 mi) from the border of the National Forest and is densely populated with bison and elk. A broad expanse of federal grazing land is located 16 km (10 mi) from this site.

Granite River National Forest



Map Legend

- hiking trail
- dirt road
- xxxxx federal grazing land
- ▲ forest
- ||| waterfall

Your Team's Decision

Our team believes the wolves should be relocated to site ____.

Our reasons include:

Relocation Challenge



Part II

The wolves are released at the site and several months pass. Flip a coin to determine what happens next to the wolves. Heads leads to Scenario A; tails leads to Scenario B. Develop recommendations for your scenario, and then answer the final questions.

Scenario A

Wolf 3, a young adult male in the pack, wanders north-east for several months. He remains alone and hidden in the woods until he crosses the state border and finds Harris Jordan's sheep ranch. For two weeks, he is spotted around the ranch and finally kills a pair of sheep one night. Mr. Jordan calls the Fish and Wildlife Service. Before officials can reach the ranch, Wolf 3 disappears. Twelve days later and 65 km (40 mi) away, a cattle ranch owner finds a newborn calf skeleton. By the time they discover the carcass, there is no indication of how it was killed. However, Wolf 3 is spotted on a wooded hillside in the vicinity.

In thinking about what should be done, consider the following questions:

- What are the major issues?
- What are some options for dealing with Wolf 3?
- What options would allow for leaving Wolf 3 where he is?

Your Team's Recommendation:

Scenario B

Wolves 2 and 6, male and female, leave the pack and set off alone. A lumber truck on a logging road accidentally hits and kills Wolf 2. Wolf 6 builds a den in an isolated area of the forest almost 5 km (3 mi) from any known grazing areas. She gives birth to five pups within two months.

In thinking about what should be done, consider the following questions:

- What might happen to Wolf 6 and her pups?
- How might the wolf population be affected if Wolf 6's pups died?
- Should officials intervene to save the pups if they are in danger? Why or why not?

Your Team's Recommendation:

Final Questions

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1 How will local residents, wolf supporters, and other government officials receive your decision? Who will support it? Who will oppose it?

2 List other information you would have liked to have to make your recommendation and why you think that information is important.

3 What sources could you go to to find your missing information?

Wolf Facts



General Facts

- Wolves have no natural predators except people.
- Wolves can cover extremely large distances and have been known to travel up to 15 km (about 9 mi) a day.
- A typical wolf pack may have a range of up to 130 sq km (50 sq mi) of territory.

Wolf Behavior Facts

- Wolves are social animals that depend on each other for food and protection.
- A wolf pack, which will tend to stay together, can vary in number from a pair of animals to 10 wolves. Adult wolves share responsibility for caring for young.
- Wolves are generally afraid of people and avoid contact with them.
- Wolves can kill animals that are quite large, usually by isolating a weak or young animal, and chasing and attacking it in a group.
- Canadian wolves generally prey on elk.
- Normally, wolves consume everything they kill. Other predators or scavengers will quickly consume a dead animal, making it difficult to determine a cause of death.

Policy Facts

- Wolves are often released in a process known as *soft release*; they are kept in pens to help them adjust to a new environment for 10 weeks. This process significantly eliminates the wolves' homing instinct and prevents them from trying to return to their original territory.
- The federal government pays for the wolf relocation program.
- Many ranchers have federal grazing preferences—they are allowed to let their animals graze on federal land.
- The Endangered Species Act allows a two-strike policy; after its first interaction with livestock, a wolf is moved to a distant site. After its second interaction, a wolf may be trapped or shot.