

### **Wild Wolves We Have Known: Stories of Wolf Biologists' Favorite Wolves**

Edited by Richard P. Thiel, Allison C. Thiel, and Marianne Strozewski. 2013. Second printing 2015. International Wolf Center, Ely, MN, USA. 280 pages, 18.95 CAD, Paper.

I was teeming with excitement at the opportunity to review *Wild Wolves We Have Known: Stories of Wolf Biologists' Favorite Wolves*, given both the topic and the well-known wolf biologists who contributed to this volume (see p. 242-245). The book is a fascinating account of the lives of 23 of the authors' favourite wolves and the packs they were associated with. While every

wolf who has ever lived has a story to tell (p. xiv), each chapter focuses on a 'famous' wolf, or at least one well known to the research team and the people following their project.

These stories take place all over the world, but most occur in the United States (Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho; northern Montana

in and around Glacier National Park; Isle Royale National Park in Michigan; Upper Peninsula of Michigan; northern Minnesota; Wisconsin; Red Wolf country in North Carolina; Mexican Wolf habitat in New Mexico, bordering Arizona; and Alaska) and Canada (Waterton Lakes National Park, British Columbia; Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario; Wood Buffalo Provincial Park in Alberta; Northwest Territories; Yukon Territory; and Ellesmere Island in the High Arctic), with three chapters occurring in Europe (Scandinavia [mostly Sweden]; Spain; and Romania). There is a simple but very informative map on pages iv-v showing these locations. Most of the wolf stories are about Gray Wolves (*Canis lupus*) but one chapter describes a Red Wolf (*Canis rufus*), one an Eastern Wolf (*Canis lycaon*) in Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario, and one an Eastern Coyote × Eastern Wolf hybrid just outside of Algonquin Park.

Included in the book was a trio of biologists' narratives about 3 different wild wolves from Yellowstone National Park. Rick McIntyre's story of the '06 female' (pronounced oh-six; Chapter 13) especially reverberated with me as I had watched her many times in Yellowstone and include pictures of her and her pack (Lamar Canyon) in my book, *My Yellowstone Experience*.

It takes endless hours of dedication and perseverance in making the observations and putting the pieces of the puzzle together to be able to describe the stories of these popular wolves. The editors of *Wild Wolves We Have Known* – led by Dick Thiel – do an admirable job of organizing these stories into one highly engaging and easy-to-read chronicle. And the book description provides an accurate and concise summary of its contents:

“Most wolf biologists have encountered hundreds of wild wolves in their careers, and in that process, many have become witness to the intimate lives and fates of a select handful of individuals. Over the years, these biologists have occasionally shared stories of their ‘favourite’ wolves with one another, often over drinks at the local pub during wolf conferences. Few outsiders have been privy to these stories—until now! This is a remarkable collection of tales spanning the globe, from the earliest studies to the present day. *Wild Wolves We Have Known* tells the stories of individual wolves through the lenses of those who know them best—the biologists who have studied them. Immerse yourself in the fieldwork; observe the challenges facing the species, and bear witness to the extraordinary resilience of these remarkable wolves.”

Also, a 2 min 40 sec video, produced by the International Wolf Center (<http://www.wolf.org/learn/basic-wolf-info/in-depth-resources/books-and-videos->

about-wolves/wild-wolves-we-have-known/), provides an excellent visual summary to this volume.

One can glean from reading this book that it is about the best of the best wolves these researchers have studied. Of course that is a relative and subjective description, but usually these creatures did have a disproportionate impact in the data that they provided to the researchers studying them, let alone the rewarding, intimate experiences they were able to gain from these animals. This book, by its very nature, is highly personalized as it is about individual wolves. I have been criticized for being too subjective and emotional when I wrote my first book, *Suburban Howls* ([www.EasternCoyoteResearch.com](http://www.EasternCoyoteResearch.com)), on Eastern Coyotes or Coywolves as they are now also called (Canadian Field-Naturalist, 2013, 127(1): 1–16). Appendix 1 (p. 245–255) of *Suburban Howls*, titled “Coyotes We Have Known”, provides a summary to all of the study subjects who contributed to my observations. Additionally, in Appendix 10 (p. 267–270), “Ode to Casper, the Survivor”, I provided a four-page tribute to an amazing, wolf-sized (55 pounds; also see Canadian Field-Naturalist, 2005, 119(1): 139–140) female Eastern Coyote/Coywolf that I studied for a decade on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The stereotypical response from state wildlife managers to these sections was “biologists aren’t supposed to write like that” when ascribing names and even feelings to some of my study subjects, even though I also scientifically documented the importance of some of those animals (e.g., Canadian Field-Naturalist, 2008, 122(4): 316–322 and Canadian Field-Naturalist, 2007, 121(4): 397–401). Given this backdrop, it probably isn’t all too surprising that the title of *Wild Wolves We Have Known* immediately resonated with me given the similar focus, not on populations, but individual animals. While often frowned upon by wildlife agencies that are seemingly stuck in the old-school thought of focusing on populations, the heart of a growing new field, called Compassionate Conservation (Biological Conservation, 2013, 158: 422–423), emphasizes the importance of individuals. After all, it is a collection of individuals that comprise a population! While I don’t think the intention of the authors of *Wild Wolves We Have Known* was to promote this new discipline, I get the definite sense that the general public really responds to these individual stories (I know I did!), which will ultimately help push wildlife managers to consider the lives of individuals, especially predators, in their management. I kept casual note of the word individual as I read *Wild Wolves* and found it mentioned on pages vii, ix, x, xii, xiv, 14, 15, 21, 131, 141, 147, 157, and 193, not to mention the fact that every chapter focused on specific wolves.

Within the book’s 280 pages are 16 delightful color plates (totaling 36 pictures) that literally bring these wolves to life. Here we see what many of these wolves look like including ‘Old Two Toes’ (his tracks) of Wis-

consin; wolf 192 of the Bechler Pack in Yellowstone; Superior National Forest, Minnesota female wolf 2407; Montana wolf 'Sage'; Alaska's Step Mountain Pack's white female 175; Tundra Wolves in the Northwest Territories; 'Ole Gimpy' of Wood Buffalo National Park, Alberta; Mexican Wolf 'Bob' in Gila National Forest, New Mexico; pups of wolf 797 in New Mexico; Mexican Wolf male 973; wolf 475 of Wisconsin's dog-killing Shanagolden Pack; Scandinavian wolf 'Ulrik'; huge Delta Pack male 760 in Yellowstone; Eastern Wolf  $\times$  Coyote hybrid canid 49-09; Red Wolf 344; 'Big Al, The Little Gal' of Wisconsin's Bootjack Pack; 'Old Gray Guy' of Isle Royale National Park; and the Spanish wolf 'Ernesto'. A picture of my favorite wolf, the '06 female', was not shown in this section. In the color plate section, we also get to see some of the wolf biologists themselves in a few of these pictures. As the above section illustrates, certain biologists were comfortable naming their study wolves while others stuck to strict scientific protocols of assigning numbers. I appreciated the authors who were bold enough to name

their research subjects.

Certain book chapters focused solely on the wolves themselves while others included the animals as well as the people living in the wolves ranges. Some of the authors were very forthcoming about how irrational some of the anti-wolf people they encountered were (such as p. 97 & 103 in New Mexico), while others chose to stay out of politics. Simply put, I loved this book. I can't recommend it enough and believe that readers interested in nature, carnivores, and individual animals will be fascinated by these wolves as well. It is a very unique perspective, not just on wolves, but on animals in general, because of its focus on individuals. The paperback contained only minor grammatical errors and is really easy to read as each chapter stands alone. I hope that the editors consider publishing a 2nd volume of wolf stories in the future as I enjoyed this edition so much!

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