

INTERNATIONAL WOLF

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Wolves Seen Positively in Canada, Inconsistently in Mongolia, Absent in Andalusia. Iconic “Traveling Wolf” Shot in Hungary

By Tracy O’Connell

CANADA

Seven in 10 Canadians surveyed have a “very” (29%) or “moderately” (41%) positive view of the wolf, according to *Tri City News*, a British Columbia-based media outlet reporting on research conducted last March for the wildlife non-profit Fur Bearers. Headquartered in Vancouver, the Fur Bearers sees itself as “a non-partisan organization that protects fur-bearing animals through conservation, advocacy, research and education.”

The survey results uncover more than a few anomalies compared to surveys done elsewhere. For one, more positive views were found to be held by rural, rather than urban, populations. Typically, positive feelings toward wolves are more likely held by city dwellers who are insulated from conflicts with wolves. Surprisingly, these positive rural views were held despite 60% of respondents agreeing with the

statement that “wolves are a primary threat to Canadian livestock.”

The 1,000 Canadians surveyed for this report were not unfamiliar with wolves. More than a quarter had seen or heard a wolf in a wilderness area, and a third had encountered one in a zoo or sanctuary. Only one in five had never seen nor heard a wolf.

Sixty-eight percent said the killing of wolves is wrong, even to save another species. These results were more strongly voiced in the western provinces, where wolf culling is taking place to boost the caribou population.

Respondents were divided about how willing they were to live in areas populated by wolves; 24% did not want wolves at any distance from their homes; 26% would be comfortable with them within 50 km (31 miles); 22% would accept wolves within 20 km (nearly 12.5 miles) and 16% would accept them within 5 km (just over 3 miles) of where they lived.

Carried out by the Canadian opinion firm Research Co., the study has a margin of error of 3.1%.

In more news from Canada, International Wolf Center member and wolf educator Suzanne Charron highlights an educational exhibit that has run since last spring:

Located in the nation’s capital of Ottawa, Ontario, the Canadian Museum of Nature (CMN) views its mission as saving the world for future generations through evidence, knowledge and inspiration. To accomplish this goal, the staff occasionally lets inspiration guide them, as when, in June 2022, award-winning wildlife photographer Michelle Valberg approached the museum.

As CMN project manager Caroline Lanthier relates, Valberg offered to display her photographs of wolves taken on Vancouver Island and in Yellowstone National Park. That was the spark staff needed to put together the exhibition, which will run until March 2024.

Targeting families with children, *Wolves: Shapeshifters in a Changing World* is designed to educate, dispel myths and provide insights about the predator. “Wolves fascinate us, largely because they are elusive. They are also often misunderstood. We hope that this exhibition, created by our museum, will inspire visitors to reflect on their relationship with these amazing animals and the importance of conservation,” CMN President and CEO Dr. Danika Goosney reflected in a press release last spring.

The exhibit, in English and French, introduces the domestication of wolves by humans, intended to ease young visitors into the wolf world. To compare dogs to their wild relatives, visitors can share photos of their pets through the museum’s social media campaign, #Wolf to Woof.

Elsewhere in the hall, a display of a mounted gray wolf and a *Canis lupus* skeleton leads visitors to learn why wolves are “shapeshifters.” Research done by museum paleontologist Dr.



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Danielle Fraser shows that the wolf survived the last Ice Age by changing its diet. Her work is depicted alongside the partial skull of a 40,000-year-old wolf. The museum holds one of the largest collections of wolf specimens in North America; the 2,500 objects, consisting mostly of skeletal elements, help researchers follow the wolf's evolution through time.

Wolves are perceived as shapeshifters not only in the scientific world but in the cultural milieu, as well. The exposition features several pieces of wolf memorabilia, among which are a vintage French copy of *Little Red Riding Hood*, a record cover of David Bowie's narration of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, and a movie poster of *Teen Wolf*.

The Indigenous view of wolves is also showcased. Wolves as symbols of courage, strength and loyalty are represented in objects such as a paddle painted by Dean Ottawa (Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation), a silkscreen print by Art Thompson (Ditidaht First Nation) and a stonecut print by Quvianaqtuk Pudlat (Kinngait Inuit). Wilfrid Buck, a Cree elder and an expert on Indigenous astronomy, narrates a video telling the story of the "dog stars."

Also highlighted is the ongoing eastern wolf conservation project led by the Ontario's University of Guelph and

Manitoulin Island First Nations. As explained by Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) reporter Warren Schlote last year, the study combines western science and Indigenous knowledge, a collaborative approach commonly known as "two-eyed seeing."

Anchoring the 3,500 square-foot exhibition are 11 large-scale ChromaLuxe (a process embedding images in metal) photographs of wolves by Michelle Valberg. With each comes a

story about the wolf the photographer captured through her lens.

The main goal of the exhibit is to change the public's perception of wolves. Lanthier admits there is so much to say about wolves that it was challenging to choose exhibit content and make it concise and accessible to the general public. The visitors' votes, cast at the end of their visit, will shed light on the success. Let's hope it will have been promising for wolves!



Above: CMN Project Manager Caroline Lanthier examines the wolf diorama at the entrance of the exhibition.



Left: The exhibition includes an area on the evolution of wolves and their connection to domestic dogs.

Photos: Martin Lipman,
Canadian Museum of Nature



MONGOLIA

Wolves here have held a complex and nuanced place in this culture from earliest times. Environmental historian Kenneth Linden notes, “Their existence has been lamented and romanticized for centuries.” He traced some of the complexities over the centuries in a May article in *History Today*, a London-based monthly that says it is “the world’s leading serious history magazine.”

Famed Mongol warrior and leader Genghis Khan descended from a wolf, according to a book written nearly 800 years ago in the imperial Mongol language—an animal seen as rapacious and blood-thirsty, to whom Khan and his generals are at various times compared. More recently, the nation’s pastoral people prayed for protection from

wolves or for skill in killing them, while some stories and poetry depicted the animals begging for mercy, and followers of Buddhism urged compassion toward them.

One hundred years ago, revolutionaries overthrew foreign occupying forces and established the Mongolian Peoples’ Republic, the world’s second socialist country after Russia.

In time, the nomadic herding lifestyle was replaced by collectivism, and the destruction of wolves became a government-managed operation with established bounties; hunting was seen as a professional occupation. Linden

explained that handbooks for hunters supported the idea that this labor was a valid form of Marxist production, and in the early 1960s, while historians were being criticized by the government for their positive evaluations of Khan and the Mongol Empire, handbooks continued to celebrate hunting. The Soviet Union was commended for its success in wolf extermination; so too were rival capitalist countries such as the U.S.

During this period, Mongolians saw wolves as the enemy of conservation efforts because of their predation, and as a result they were viewed in the same way as the wealthy and the Buddhist clergy (who were said to escape persecution by living in caves with wolves)—two examples of class enemies. Censors banned literature that was sympathetic to wolves.

While socialism here died 30 years ago, wolf-hunting remains a hold-over, with some lamenting the fervor of the state-ordered hunting of old. But mining and climate change threaten herders as well, Linden notes, and “there are an increasing number of pro-wolf voices” that call for conservation and combat prejudice against wolves—though those voices remain in the minority.





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HUNGARY

A two-year-old wolf that traveled a record-breaking 1,000 miles across four countries was shot by poachers. Three months later, police have two suspects in custody on suspicion of harming nature and abusing firearms, according to *Newsweek*. Known as M237, the wolf was born in Graubünden, Switzerland and fitted with a GPS collar by the local wildlife agency. In June 2022 he began his “mammoth migration,” the longest recorded in Europe, the article states. The conservation nonprofit Wolf Switzerland narrated the journey in a Facebook post: the young wolf “crossed the border into Italy and then into Austria, hiked up to the Danube, changed his mind and moved away to the southeast. In mid-February he crossed the Hungarian border and headed toward Budapest.” ■

found in the northwest, where they are protected, primarily in Castilla y León, Galicia and Asturias. Andalusia is in the nation’s south, a diverse region of farmland, hills and rivers that includes the city of Seville and Gibraltar, a British-controlled outpost that separates the Atlantic Ocean, to the west, from the Mediterranean Ocean to the east.

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SPAIN

The Iberian wolf is officially extinct in the Andalusia mountain range here, *The Guardian* reported in July. Monitored for 20 years by the regional government in an attempt to reduce conflict with the local population, the canid’s numbers have been declining. And despite the wolf’s status as a protected species, there has been no sign of the animal’s presence since 2020, a situation called “shameful” and “incomprehensible” by conservationists who decry the lack of a legally required recovery plan.

Disagreement exists about the number of wolves living in this physically and genetically isolated area, with some claiming six or more packs existed in 2010, and others saying there hasn’t been a breeding pack in two decades.

Spain’s most recent census two years ago counted between 2,000 and 2,500 wolves in nearly 300 packs. Most were



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