

Perception of the Wolf

Contributed by All data on this page was taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolf>
Sunday, 25 February 2007
Last Updated Sunday, 20 May 2007

The relationship between humans and wolves has had a very long and turbulent history.

Traditionally, humans have viewed wolves negatively, fearing them – a perception now known to be extremely undeserved. European folklore exacerbated this negative image, which was brought over to North America with migrating Europeans. In brief, the gray wolf, which, at one point, could be found in any ecosystem on every continent in the Northern Hemisphere, was persistently one of the first species to go once a significant population of humans settled in a given area. As technology made the killing of wolves and other predators easier, simple control gave way to complete annihilation.

Wolves are nevertheless portrayed in a positive light by some myths and legends, and many languages have names that mean "wolf" (Scandinavian Ulf, Albanian "Ujk", Hebrew Ze'ev, Serbian Vuk, Bulgarian Vîlko, etc.)

Historically, unwarranted fear of the wolf has been responsible for most of the trouble the species has received, including why it was nearly hunted out of existence in the U.S. and Europe prior to the 20th century. However, ecological research conducted during the 20th century shed new light on wolves and other predators, specifically with regard to the critical role they play in maintaining the ecosystems to which they belong. As a result of this and other important factors, wolves have come to be viewed in a much more positive way.

A general environmental awareness began to take root sometime in the middle of the 20th century that forced people to re-think former notions, including those regarding predators. In North America, people realized that in over one hundred years of documentation, there had been no verified human fatality caused by an attack from a healthy wolf.

Wolves are actually naturally cautious and will almost always flee from humans, perhaps only carefully approaching a person out of curiosity. There are, however, some reported attacks in North America where it is thought that the wolves involved had become habituated to humans.

Although attitudes have significantly changed, there are still many who hold more cautious views of the wolf.

All data on this page was taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolf>