

STATUS OF THE TIMBER WOLF IN WISCONSIN
PERFORMANCE REPORT, 1 July 1989 to 30 June 1990

by Adrian Wydeven

SUMMARY

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources continued the timber wolf recovery program.

A 20 minute education slide program was developed through a cooperative effort between the Department and the Timber Wolf Alliance.

The Department continued monitoring the coyote closure during the gun deer season.

A Cooperative Wolf Management Agreement was developed for 55,000 acres of industrial forest land in Lincoln and Oneida counties.

Five wolves were captured and radio-collared during spring and summer 1989. Wolves were captured in each of the main study areas: Douglas county, Price-Oneida county and Lincoln county. Nine radio-collared wolves were monitored during the study period. All wolves captured during the study period were vaccinated for Canine Parvovirus, Distemper and Crona Virus.

A damage claim was paid when wolves apparently killed a bobcat tracking hound in Lincoln County.

The Department worked with U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to expand monitoring efforts. Quarterly reports were written to keep the general public informed.

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PERFORMANCE REPORT

July 1, 1989 to June 30, 1990

prepared by Adrian Wydeven, Nongame Wildlife Biologist

Job 105.1 Direct Educational Activities

Objective: Develop audit/visual materials for use and distribution.

Department personnel cooperated with a private organization, the Timber Wolf Alliance, in the development of a 20 minute education slide program.

Richard P. Thiel of the Department of Natural Resources acted as a liaison to the Timber Wolf Alliance providing technical advice and information.

Job 105.2 Provide Legal Protection

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) continued monitoring the coyote closure during the gun deer season. Radio collared packs were flown almost daily during the gun deer season.

Job 105.3 Cooperatively Manage Habitat with Landowners

William Meier, the DNR Wildlife Manager at Merrill, developed a Cooperative Wolf Management Agreement for 55,000 acres of industrial forest land in Lincoln and Oneida Counties. The agreement was signed by the DNR and Nekoosa Papers, Inc., on April 24, 1990.

Job 105.4 Monitor the Annual Population Trends and Distributions

Five wolves were captured and radio-collared during spring and summer 1989 (Table 1). Wolves were captured in each of the main study areas: Douglas County, Price-Oneida County and Lincoln County.

Nine radio-collared wolves were monitored during the study period (Table 2). A summary of the events of each monitored animal follows:

Douglas County Both members of the 35 pack were monitored throughout most of the study period. Radios of both animals failed in May 1990. Male 063 was observed through radio-telemetry 43 times and female 059 49 times; both were together on 41 of these observations. The lower observations of 063 was due to apparent radio failure. All five visual observations of 063 were with 059 and 059 was seen with 063 during five or six visual observations.

Wolves 063 and 059 occupied about 23 square miles west of Highway 35 and east of the Minnesota line. No pups were apparently produced in 1989 and they did not display denning activity in spring 1990.

Wolf 139M occupied an area of about 79 square miles centered on the Empire swamp north of CTH M. This wolf made several trips outside of his main home range. Twice 139M moved north to an area west of Amicon Lake in October and November 1989 about 7 miles from his regular home range. On October 11, 1989 he was observed 12 miles to the west in Minnesota. During February and March, 139 was observed in southeast Douglas County, and western Bayfield County. The last two locations in March were 29 miles east and 32 miles northeast of his regular home range. This observation on March 5, 1990 was just north of the main home range of the Rainbow Lake pack. By early April, 139 was back into his regular territory.

No other wolves were seen with 139 during the seven times that he was visually observed. Previous observations of this area had suggested the possibility that two or three wolves occurred in the area. It is possible that 139 may have bred during the study period.

The other two packs in Douglas County (Moose Lake and Truck Trail pack) were not radio-monitored during the study period. Larry Prens, wolf technician, obtained winter track counts of two wolves in the Moose Lake and three to four in the Truck Trail pack.

Bayfield County. Wolf number 107 of the Rainbow Lake pack was observed 57 times during the study period. Despite his radio-collar having functioned for over 3 years, he continues to provide monitoring data. This wolf occupied 31 square miles; a single observation located 4.5 miles north of the main home range was not included in calculating the home range area.

Wolf number 107 occupied an area on the Chequamegon National Forest north of Pigeon Lake. During 7 of 12 visual observations of 107, he was seen with another wolf. It appears denning activities did occur in this pack in April.

Oneida-Price County. Two wolves were monitored from this pack from July to mid-winter (125M and 126M). During February 1990 125M died of unknown causes, and radio contact was lost from 126M. Prior to the death of 125M, 5 wolves occurred in this pack. The pack apparently denned and raised 4 pups to late June 1990 when an additional wolf (157M) was collared in this pack.

From July 1989 to January 1990, the Boot Jack Lake pack occupied about 28 square miles in western Oneida/eastern Price county. Because only 28 observations were made of the pack the home range could be somewhat larger.

Lincoln County. Wolf 075 covered an area of about 83 square miles in western Lincoln County until contact was lost on February 2, 1990. Her last movements were toward the edge of her range, therefore she may have dispersed. Only 1 visual observation was made of 075, and she was alone at that time. Track surveys by Ron Schultz indicated that 5 wolves occurred in the Averill Creek area occupied by 075.

Wolf 101 was caught as a pup right outside a veal farm in the Ranger Island pack. The wolf occupied an area of about 32 square miles from August 1989 to January 29, 1990. Radio contact was lost after January and the wolf was not heard from until late June when it was killed west of Hinkley, Minnesota (about 158 miles WNW of its home range). The wolf was apparently involved in some livestock depredation in Minnesota.

Wolf 101 had been visually observed with 4 other wolves on 2 occasions. The adults from this pack appeared to have successfully produced some pups.

Winter Wolf Population. The minimum population for wolves in Wisconsin in 1989-90 was 32 (table 3). Table 3 includes the listing of a new pack in eastern Sawyer/western Price County known as the Log Creek pack. Larry Prens observed tracks and sign of these 2 wolves that suggested breeding was occurring. Larry found double leg-raised urination and blood in the urine of one of the wolves. There was also some indications that breeding might be occurring in the Frog Creek area of Washburn County and the Little Rice River area of Oneida County. The population estimation of 32 indicates a slight increase from 1988-89 when 31 wolves were counted.

Table 4 lists mortality found on the radio-collared wolves. Wolf 113M who was last observed in Wisconsin on 11-08-88, was shot by a hunter in Rainy Lake, Ontario in November 1988. This represents a movement of at least 290 miles. Reports on the other 2 wolves that died were discussed earlier. Litters were successfully produced in 4 wolf packs in 1989 (TTP, BLP, RIP, ACP). Apparently 2-3 pups survived to winter in each of these packs.

Job 105.5 Initiate Disease Abatement

All wolves captured during the study period were vaccinated for Canine Parvovirus, Distemper and Corona Virus. It is becoming questionable whether vaccination has much impact on wild wolves, and this practice may be discontinued in the near future.

Only 1 wolf was autopsied during the period (125M). Final results of the necropsy have not been obtained.

105.7 Implement Livestock Damage Control Activities

Wolves had apparently killed a bobcat tracking hound on 12-27-89 in Lincoln County. The DNR compensated for the loss of the hound by paying the claimant \$5,000.00.

105.8 Coordinate Wolf Management Activities with Federal, State and County Agencies

The DNR cooperated with the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in an expanded wolf monitoring effort for Wisconsin during the summer of 1990. Several meetings were conducted between DNR, Forest Service and Fish & Wildlife Service to develop the monitoring program.

The DNR also has been involved in updating the Federal Recovery Plan for the Eastern Timber Wolf.

105.9 Continue Citizen Participation Activities

Quarterly reports on wolf activities have been written by Dick Thiel, Larry Prens, Ron Schultz and Bill Meier during the study period. Wydeven will take over this responsibility during the next study period.

Numerous presentations on wolf biology have been given by Bill Meier and other DNR personnel.

105.10 Volunteer Program Activities

Three volunteers were activated for summer 1990 field work. Bill Meier provided training and coordination for volunteer activities.

Carol Schultz has acted in a volunteer capacity for many years in aiding the wolf program. Carol was hired as a part-time employee for the wolf program during the summer. Carol's work is also coordinated through Bill Meier.

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TABLE 1. Capture Data of Wolves Caught in Wisconsin in 1989

<u>Study Area/Pack</u>	<u>Wolf#</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Capture Data</u>
Lincoln Co/Averill Cr	075	F	Y	53 lbs.	5-25-89
Lincoln Co/Ranger Isl.	101	M	P	44 lbs.	8-9-89
Price-Oneida Co/Bootjack Lake	125	M	A	56½ lbs.	7-13-89
Price-Oneida Co/Bootjack	126	M	A	70½ lbs.	7-14-89
Douglas Co/Empire	139	M	A	73½ lbs.	6-7-89

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TABLE 2. Capture and Telemetry Data on Wolves Monitored from July 1, 1989, through June 30, 1990.

<u>Wolf</u>	<u># Pack</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Captured</u>	<u>Date Located</u>	<u>Last Date # Locations</u>	<u>Territory Size (miles)</u>	<u># Wolves</u>
<u>Douglas Co.</u>								
059	35P	F	A	5-13-85	5-19-90	49	23	2
063	35P	M	A	5-20-86	5-15-90	43	20	2
139	EP	M	A	6-7-89	MC**	58	79	1 (2?)
<u>Bayfield Co.</u>								
107	RLP	M	A	5-22-87	MC	57	31	2
<u>Pierce Co.</u>								
125	BJP	M	A	7-13-89	2-7-90	31	25	5
126	BJP	M	A	7-14-89	1-16-90	28	28	5
157	BJP	M	A	6-28-90	MC	2	No estimate	?
<u>Lincoln Co.</u>								
075	ACP	F	A	5-25-89	2-2-90	27	83	5?
101	RIP	M	A	8-9-89	1-29-90	32	32	5

* Locations in June 1989 - June 1990

** MC = Monitoring Continued

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TABLE 3. 1989-1990 Midwinter Estimation of Wisconsin's Timber Wolf Population

<u>County</u>	<u>Area or Pack Name</u>	<u>Wolf #</u>	<u>Evidence*</u>
Douglas	Moose Lake	2	T
Douglas	Empire	1 or 2	R & T
Douglas	Hwy 35	2	R
Douglas	Truck Trail	4	T
Bayfield	Rainbow Lake	2	R
Sawyer	Log Creek	2	T
Washburn	Frog Creek	1	T
Price/Oneida	Bootjack	5	R
Lincoln	Ranger Island	5	R & T
Lincoln	Averill Creek	5	R
Price	Prentice	1	T
Oneida	Little Rice R.	1	T
Forest	Pine River	1	T
	TOTAL =	32	

* T = Track Survey
 R = Radio-collared pack

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TABLE 4. Mortality During 1989-1990 of Radio-Collared Wolves

<u>Wolf #</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Date Captured</u>	<u>Date Died</u>	<u>Cause of Death</u>
101	M	P	8-9-89	7-7-90	Prob. shooting near Hickory MN
113	F	Y	5-20-88	11-7-89	Shooting - Ontario Canada
125	M	A	7-13-89	2-7-90	Unknown-prob. natural mortality

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