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Feb. 9, 2007  
Mr. Jack, English

### Saving the Wolves

The *Canis lupus*, more popularly known as the wolf, is constantly portrayed as an evil animal throughout endless eras. Wolves are not evil, but have been represented so because they are greatly misunderstood.

Politicians and activists have worked together to help protect these majestic animals. Laws such as the Endangered Species Act, have been created to help balance our ecosystem. In 1973, the Eastern timber wolf was added to this list, but to no avail because they continued to be killed, roughly 250 per year by farmers and livestock owners.<sup>1</sup> They justify killing these animals by claiming that the majority of fatalities in their livestock are caused by wolves. In reality, the wolves can only be blamed for a handful deaths, and the greater part of livestock deaths are actually cause by harsh weather conditions and illness. According to the International Wolf Center, wolves kill roughly 40,000 deer per year in Minnesota. Hunters in Minnesota kill almost 80,000 deer per year.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in Minnesota wolves kill half the amount of deer that hunters kill each year.

Another common misconception about wolves is that we must kill a good number of them each year in order to balance our ecosystem, which is a huge part of conserving our world. The truth is that wolves, being dominant predator, are at the top of the food chain. If we were to eliminate wolves from existence, the coyote population increases, as would elk and buffalo populations. Causing an effect similar to that of dominoes, the population of foxes, badgers, and martens would dwindle due to the extreme competition for food. In addition, the lack of elk remains left by the wolves would starve bears, magpies, and ravens leaving them weak or dead. The extreme spike in elk and deer

populations would leave meadows, hills, and grassy areas empty. Professionals such as Yellowstone biologist Douglas Smith say, “The wolf is a keystone species. You remove it and the effects cascade down to the grasses.”<sup>3</sup>

As shown in many Hollywood movies, it is thought that wolves frequently kill, or injure humans. Hollywood has historically done so to create an emotion of fear from the viewers. Nevertheless, no need to worry, because Hollywood entertains people, not informs people. The truth is that in the past 400 years, there has never been a human death by wolf.<sup>4</sup> Healthy wolves will not attack a person, unless provoked. In fact, most wild wolves will do their best to avoid humans. “A person in wolf country has a greater chance of being killed by a dog, lightning, a bee sting, or a car collision with deer than being injured by a wolf.”<sup>4</sup>

If you want to live in a world where there is no balance; if you want to live in a killing world; if you want to live in a Hollywood world, if you want to live in an immoral, and unethical world; if you want to live in a world without wolves; if you want to live in a world that may not exist in 50 or so more years; then please go ahead, blame the wolves for everything, and just shoot them all, or even just sit there and watch everyone else continue to slaughter them. However, if you want to make a positive difference for a world that will still exist even after 50 years, take action by writing a letter to a political leader, donating money to wolf protection organizations, or just by educating yourself and learning the facts. Wolves are not evil or deadly, only greatly misunderstood, and constantly used as scapegoats.

## Bibliography

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