

# Living with Wolves

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



E N C O U R A G I N G   C O E X I S T E N C E



## Dear Friends,

The chatter of squirrels, interspersed by ravens squawking. The percussive thrum of woodpeckers, underlying the distinctive song of busy chickadees. And then the long, clear note of a wolf howl pierces the air, echoed by a distant reply. This is the soundscape that greets visitors in our new Living with Wolves Museum: voices from Wolf Camp, immortalized in Jamie's sound recordings. Through film and their vocalizations, the Sawtooth Pack continues to inspire people to take an interest in wolves.

Accomplishing our long-term goal of opening the museum has made for a busy year. A dedicated public presence allows us to engage with visitors on a daily basis. Entering into direct and meaningful dialogue with guests affords us the opportunity to personalize the conversation to their particular interests. We are able to answer questions and delve much deeper into topics that are often complex. Time and again, visitors have expressed their appreciation for the museum as a way to inspire wonder and hope in light of the cruelty wolves endure.

The wolves of the Northern Rockies are still under tremendous pressure from state policies intent on radically reducing their recovering populations. In a diametrically opposed scenario, officials in Colorado are working to reintroduce wolves by December, but several Rocky Mountain states are refusing to provide wolves for Colorado's reintroduction effort. Their obstinance speaks volumes. Decision makers in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana would rather see their wolves dead than relocated.

Meanwhile, federal officials have repeatedly delayed a decision on the status review of the wolf in this region, allowing the persecution to continue. Elsewhere in the nation, wolves are still protected, but federal lawmakers are proposing bills to permanently remove gray wolves from the Endangered Species List, with the intent to bar any possibility of future judicial review, which has been one of the few ways in which wolves have been granted periods of respite from relentless hunting and trapping.

We stand firm in our commitment to usher in a world where wolves are allowed to flourish, unmolested. It is our sincere wish that everyone be allowed the opportunity to hear wolves howling in the wild. That is why we continue to work on behalf of wolves everywhere.

Thank you for your continued support.

*Jim Jamie*



Jim and Jamie Dutcher, Founders, Living with Wolves



## LIVING WITH WOLVES MUSEUM

This year marked an exciting milestone for Living with Wolves when we opened our wolf museum on July 25 in Ketchum, Idaho. For some time now, we have been envisioning a multi-purpose space to anchor our outreach efforts promoting wolves, wildlife, and wild places. We wanted to create an environment where visitors would be immersed in the world of the wolf.

The centerpiece of the museum is our photographic exhibit, produced in collaboration with National Geographic. Remarkable images and interpretive captions explore the ecological benefits of wolves, wolf pack social dynamics, ranching in wolf country, and many other topics. We've mixed new soundtracks from our recordings with the Sawtooth Pack so that ambient nature sounds permeate the main gallery, punctuated periodically by echoing wolf howls. Multi-media educational material and award-winning film clips play in the museum's screening room.



**Top:** Living with Wolves Museum exterior.  
**Bottom:** A first glimpse stepping into the world of the wolf.



**Top:** A young visitor browsing the exhibit.  
**Bottom:** Wolf pack social behavior illuminated in words and images.

The new museum represents a dramatic expansion of our educational outreach efforts, allowing us to interact with the public on a daily basis. Engaging in dialogue with visitors allows us to delve deep into discussion with groups and individuals. Not only are we able to answer their questions, but we have an opportunity to explain the current political outlook impacting wolves, to dispel myths and misconceptions, and to share information about wolf behavior, biology, and wolf pack social dynamics, the heart and soul of all we do.

We hosted a Grand Opening reception at the museum on September 28, and we had a full house during the entire event. The feedback we have received has been overwhelmingly positive, and we welcomed over 2,000 visitors in our first two months of operation. The culmination of this long-anticipated project would not have been possible without the help of supporters like you.



**Top Left:** Guests watching film clips in the screening room.

**Bottom Left:** Beyond our time at Wolf Camp, the museum addresses challenges wolves face today.

**Top Right:** Reception area in the main gallery.

**Bottom Right:** Installation of wolf windows on the building's exterior.

## ADVISORY BOARD PROFILE: Advancing Research with Kira Cassidy



Kira Cassidy measuring the depth of the Snake River pack's den in Yellowstone National Park. The back of the den benefits from a natural thermal heat source, keeping it around 50 degrees inside even when outside temperatures are below freezing.

PHOTO CREDIT: ROMAN DONOVAN

As an invaluable member of an elite team of researchers, Kira Cassidy studies wolves in one of the most enviable scientific laboratories on the planet, Yellowstone, the world's first national park. Kira knew from a young age that she wanted to work in nature, and her love for animals eventually led to her volunteering for the Yellowstone Wolf Project. This work resulted in a field technician position in the park, following the Druid Peak and Agate Creek packs during the project's intensive winter studies.

As a research associate, Kira's first opportunity to become the lead author on a study came under the tutelage of the project's long-

standing leader, Dr. Douglas Smith. This research was of interest to our team at Living with Wolves, because it was well-aligned with our mission to shine a light on the complex and fragile nature of wolf families. From 2015 to 2023, in the interest of advancing critically important research, Living with Wolves helped support this study.

The researchers sought to uncover the impacts of hunting and trapping on highly social and interwoven wolf families. It was an enormous undertaking that required exceptional collaboration, involving five national parks on a continental scale across North America. Much of the data collected and analyzed came

from the past nine years, but some, especially from Denali National Park and Preserve, dates back several decades. The study culminated in a peer-reviewed paper entitled "Human-caused mortality triggers pack instability in gray wolves."

The outstanding work from Kira and the entire team of researchers in Yellowstone, Denali, Grand Teton, Voyageurs and Yukon-Charley reached rare benchmarks of achievement. In the nine months since publication, theirs is the third best performing paper in terms of media attention and online engagement of the 1,740 papers published by the well-regarded journal, *Frontiers in Ecology and the*

*Environment*. Most importantly, their work has helped to shift the conversation in understanding the deeper impacts of humankind's actions in relation to this vulnerable and sensitive species.

In large part, all previous studies about wolf populations' response to human-caused mortality focused on numbers, such as how people killing wolves affects population counts or how much killing a population of wolves can endure without collapsing. This new research pushes the dialogue in a direction we at Living with Wolves find particularly meaningful. How do individual wolf families respond to exploitation by people?

The findings reveal that hunting and trapping of wolves cause instability in packs, to the point that packs can actually fall apart. This was often true if one of the two leaders, especially the alpha female, was killed. Loss of a leader also greatly diminishes the likelihood of the pack producing a litter of pups. The study demonstrates that hunting and trapping of wolves tears at the fabric of wolf familial society, causing the dissolution and disappearance of entire packs.

Over the years, Kira has contributed to numerous studies, sharpening her scientific acumen, while teaching others about wolf populations, behavior, social dynamics, and wolf and human interactions. Her graduate work focused on interpack territoriality where she discovered that elders hold a critical role in the wolf pack, bringing success to the pack with their wisdom from prior experience. As a highly effective communicator of complex scientific concepts, Kira has presented at innumerable conferences, engaged in dialogue with our Board of Directors, conducted a TEDx talk on her work with wolf pack elders and more. She delivers her message to a wide range of audiences with clarity and ease, and her search for answers continues to broaden the collective understanding of gray wolves. We look forward to following Kira's work in the years to come.

Living with Wolves looks for studies that stand to move the needle, finding opportunities to support new and ongoing research. By helping the world understand wolves and contributing to a growing body of knowledge, we promote their conservation and preservation. This is a cornerstone of our work at Living with Wolves. In 2024, we are continuing to advance wolf research by supporting studies in Yellowstone and coastal British Columbia.



PHOTO CREDIT: JOSH METTEN



PHOTO CREDIT: JOSH METTEN



PHOTO CREDIT: ERIN STAHLER

**TOP:** Using telemetry to listen for radio-collared members of the Mollie's pack in the backcountry.

**MIDDLE:** The unexpected discovery of 1118F's skull at the top of an avalanche chute. This female had died two years prior in one of the most remote areas of the park.

**BOTTOM:** Conducting an annual wolf capture with Brenna Cassidy and Dan Stahler to replace radio collars.



## WOLF NEWS 2023

In the summer of 2021, the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** (USFWS) received two petitions for the listing of gray wolves in the Western U.S. as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). After reviewing the petitions, the USFWS indicated that it would deliver its decision within one year of September 15, 2021. No determination was made by that date, and in January of 2023, the date to deliver a decision was pushed back to February 2, 2024. Meanwhile, various bills have been authored by **members of Congress seeking to remove ESA protections** for gray wolves throughout the contiguous 48 states, except for the Mexican wolf population in the Southwest.



In late spring, the **Idaho** Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) adopted a draconian wolf management plan. Over the next six years, the plan aims to reduce the population from IDFG's most recent estimate of 1,337 to a range of 350 – 650 wolves. IDFG officials approved the plan despite many consecutive years of near-record populations of huntable game animals in Idaho, such as elk and deer, and an already small but, nevertheless, decreasing number of livestock killed by wolves every year.

The plan includes many extreme provisions that are not permitted when hunting other game species in Idaho. It allows for the funding of third parties to essentially pay bounties on dead wolves and a continuous 12-month season with **no protections for pregnant females and pups**. In fact, for those willing to kill pups, they can earn a bounty payment for each. The new wolf plan allows for wolves to be shot from vehicles, including snowmobiles, as long as the vehicle is not on an officially maintained road. Weapon restrictions, that are adhered to for other big game species, no longer apply to wolves. Additionally, the plan allows for hunting at night, hunting wolves using bait, and pursuing wolves with dogs.

Throughout Idaho's last fiscal year (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023) the downward trend of livestock losses to wolves continued. At the same time, there has been a slow and steady increase in the use of non-lethal tools and strategies across Idaho.

In recent years, government officials, hunters, and trappers have killed around **500 wolves** annually. Under unrelenting pressure from the state's policies, Idaho's wolf population is in decline.



Most wolf packs in **Washington** do not cause livestock ranchers any harm. Last year, according to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), 81% of Washington's packs were not implicated in any attacks on livestock. However, in August, WDFW killed two wolves, an adult male and yearling female, from a pack in southeast Washington, believed to have been responsible for killing five calves and one cow over a three-month period. Earlier in the year, the same pack was determined to have killed seven yearling cattle across the border in Oregon.

The **poisoning** of six wolves in 2022 in Stevens County remains under investigation. Another wolf found dead in Stevens County in August of 2023 is now also under investigation. More than \$50,000 in reward money is available to anyone that provides information that leads to a conviction in these poisonings.

With its estimate of 216 wolves in the state, WDFW has recommended a "double-downlisting" for the status of its wolf population. If approved, the move would reclassify wolves from "endangered" to "sensitive," completely skipping "threatened" status. The public comment period has been closed and a final decision is tentatively scheduled for April 2024.



Four new wolf packs have been documented in **California** this year, doubling the number of packs detected in the state since 2015. Most remarkably, one of the new packs was discovered in Giant Sequoia National Monument at the southern end of the Sierra Nevada range. This new pack dramatically extends the southern reach of gray wolves recolonizing California after a ninety-year absence, which ended in 2011 when the famous wolf, OR-7, entered California from Oregon.

The pack consists of a female and her four pups. She is the direct descendant of OR-7. The father of the litter isn't known to be with the pack, but the DNA of his litter shows that he came from northern California's Lassen Pack. The nearest known pack is more than 200 miles to the north. California's wolf population is currently estimated at 38.



Proposition 114, passed in the 2020 election, mandates that wolf reintroduction to **Colorado** commence by yearend 2023. With the December 31 deadline approaching, Colorado Parks and Wildlife is searching for sources of gray wolves to

release a total of 30 – 50 wolves over the next three to five years. The ideal population source was identified as the descendants of the wolves brought back during reintroduction in the mid-1990's that have slowly expanded their range in the northern Rocky Mountain states and into the Pacific Northwest.

With an estimated combined population of 2,762 wolves, Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana have declined to cooperate with Colorado, rejecting requests to provide wolves from their heavily hunted and trapped populations. But in early October, it was announced that the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will be a source for up to 10 wolves to be captured and translocated to Colorado between December 2023 and March 2024. Officials within the Nez Perce Tribe in Idaho have also confirmed they are in talks with Colorado to potentially provide wolves living on sovereign tribal land.



The recovery of the critically endangered **Mexican wolf**, a subspecies of the gray wolf, commonly referred to as "lobos," began with the release of eleven wolves into Arizona's Apache National Forest in 1998. They currently inhabit portions of

suitable habitat in Arizona and New Mexico with a second smaller population in Mexico.

The road to recovery for Mexican wolves has been slow and arduous with between 140 – 300 killed illegally over the years. However, during this 25th anniversary of the start of Mexican wolf recovery, there is some good news. The most recent combined New Mexico and Arizona population estimate of 241 wolves (in 59 packs) represents a 23% increase from the previous year and a doubling of the population since 2017.



Dr. Dan Stahler will now lead the **Yellowstone Wolf Project**. He joined the project in 1997 as a volunteer technician and graduate student researcher. He has been working as a lead biologist with the National Park Service since 2002, where he has been leading the Yellowstone Cougar Project and the Elk Research and Monitoring Program. As project leader, he will oversee monitoring, research, and management of Yellowstone's wolves. He succeeds the renowned Dr. Douglas Smith, who led the wolf project since its inception and retired from the National Park Service at the end of 2022.





### HONORARY BOARD

James Gilliland (1933-2020)  
 Jane Goodall, Ph.D., D.B.E.  
 Barry Lopez (1945-2020)  
 Peter Matthiessen (1920-2014)  
 Robert Redford  
 Hon. John Tunney (1934-2018)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jim Dutcher, Founder  
 Jamie Dutcher, Founder  
 Mary Lee Copp  
 Marriner Eccles  
 Jean McBride Greene  
 Kim Kawaguchi  
 Andrea Nasi  
 Paul Paquet, Ph.D.  
 Carolyn MacKenzie Stimmel  
 Winston Thomas, Ph.D.

### ADVISORY BOARD

#### SCIENCE / RECOVERY

Marc Bekoff, Ph.D.  
 Kira Cassidy  
 Mark Derr  
 Cristina Eisenberg, Ph.D.  
 Camilla Fox  
 Larry Master, Ph.D.  
 Carter Niemeyer  
 William Ripple, Ph.D.  
 Adrian Treves, Ph.D.

#### ECONOMICS / TOURISM

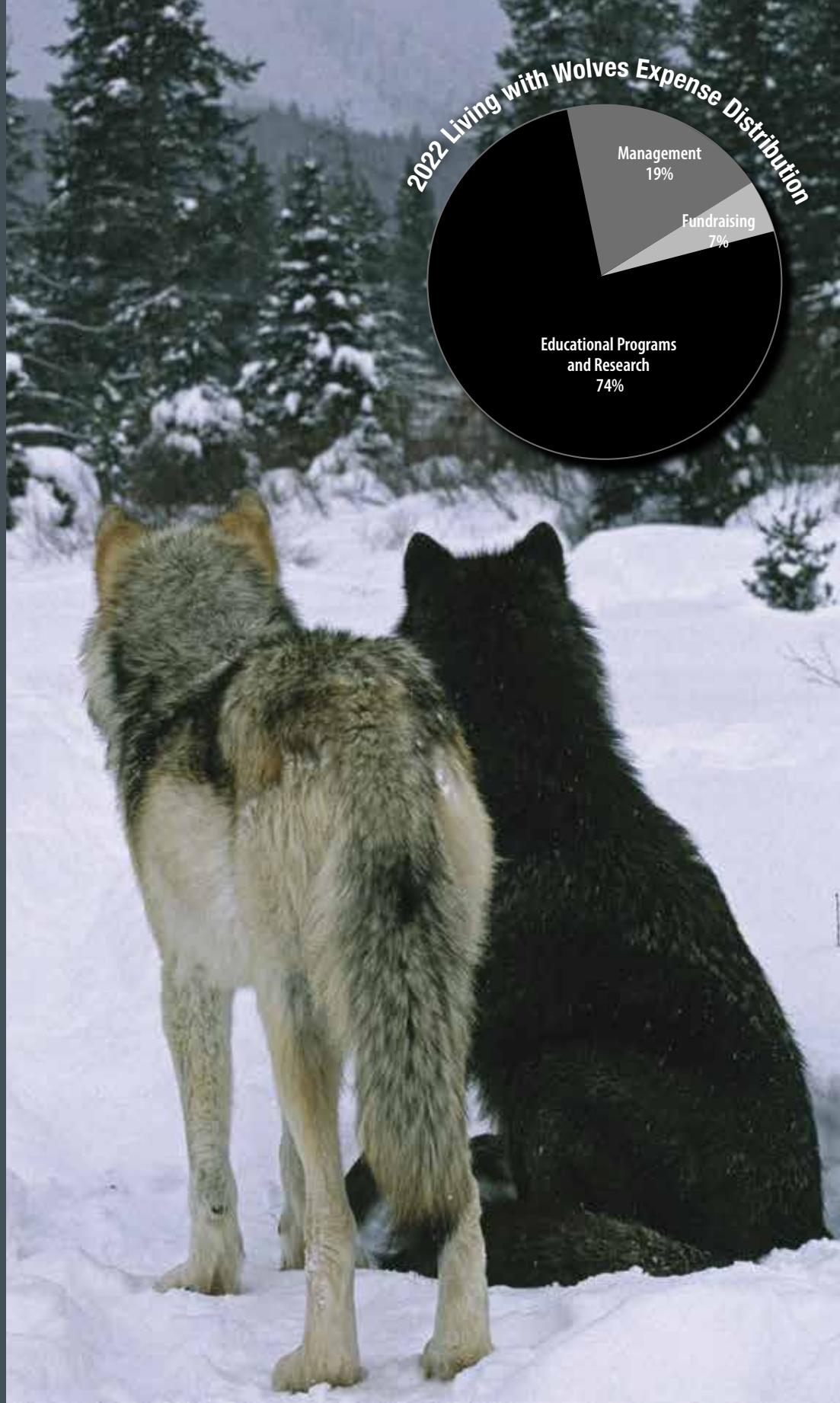
Norman Bishop  
 Francie St. Onge  
 Charlie Pomeroy  
 Nathan Varley, Ph.D.

#### RANCHING / LIVESTOCK

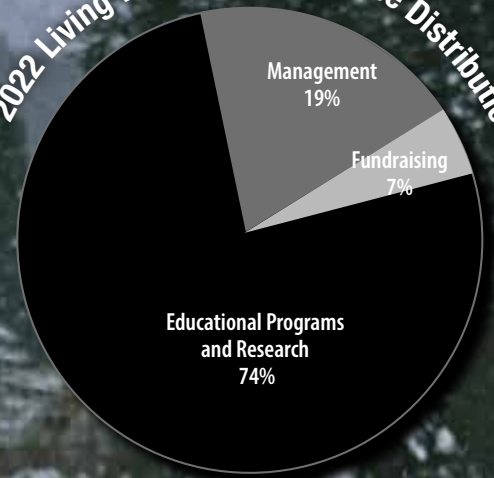
Steve Clevidence  
 Joe Engelhart  
 Timmothy Kaminski  
 Kyran Kunkel, Ph.D.

### STAFF

Christina Carlson  
 Garrick Dutcher  
 Terra Jackson  
 Patricia Kilmartin  
 Sheryl Schowengerdt  
 Megan Smith  
 Colin Wheeler



### 2022 Living with Wolves Expense Distribution



### OUR MISSION:

Living with Wolves is a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to engaging the public worldwide in education, outreach and research to promote truth and understanding about wolves, while encouraging coexistence and inspiring people to take action to protect them.

P.O. Box 896 • Sun Valley, ID 83353 • [www.livingwithwolves.org](http://www.livingwithwolves.org) • Tax ID: 20-4933982