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Where the species is found

Eastern Wolf

Canis lupus lycaon

Contrary to popular belief, wolves play an important role helping Mother Nature maintain a balanced ecosystem. If they weren't around, there would be an overpopulation of white-tailed deer and moose – and not enough food for them to eat.



Legend

- Distribution
- La Mauricie National Park

What you can do

If you see an Eastern Wolf in or around La Mauricie National Park, please report your observation to La Mauricie NP staff: information@pc.gc.ca or 1-888-773-8888

For more information, please visit:
www.pc.gc.ca/speciesatrisk
www.sararegistry.gc.ca

Eastern Wolf

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Photos: © Parks Canada Agency



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Description

Eastern Wolves are a subspecies of the Grey Wolf. They have a fawn-coloured pelt with black on the back and sides and reddish behind the ears. They stand about 80 centimetres at the shoulders and weigh 20 to 40 kilograms. Wolves have a well-organized social structure that centres on a dominant male and a dominant female. They breed once a year, usually in March or April. They generally make their den either in an old pine stump or rock crevice or they dig one in a gravel ridge created by glacial meltwater.



Litters of five or six pups are born in the den after a nine-week gestation. The pups don't emerge until they are about two weeks old, but the pack stays nearby for the first month. Sometimes another member of the pack looks after the pups while their parents go hunting. By fall, the pups travel with the pack. Wolves use howls to communicate. Members of a pack may sit down and howl at the site where the group meets. It could be a way to warn away other packs from their territory or, perhaps, a joyous celebration. Eastern Wolves prey on white-tailed deer, moose and beaver. This helps to keep the populations of these species at levels that the local environment can sustain. Packs of wolves work hard for their food. They may chase 10 large animals but only manage to kill one.

Threats

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada listed the Eastern Wolf as a subspecies of special concern in May 2001 because it's so vulnerable to human activity. Threats to these timid wolves include:

- hunting and trapping outside the parks
- death by road traffic
- disturbance from recreational activities
- industrial, agricultural and residential developments
- the transformation of the forest ecosystem due to agriculture and urbanization loss of habitat because of agriculture, logging and urbanization.



Population

Eastern Wolves are found mainly in southeastern Ontario and southwestern Quebec. Their range is about 210,000 square kilometres - only 42 per cent of what it once was. There are some 2,000 Eastern Wolves in Canada, of which 1,000 are breeding adults divided into 500 packs. The population has stayed fairly stable over the past decade, but some populations are being over-hunted.

Eastern Wolves disappeared from the Maritimes more than 100 years ago. La Mauricie National Park is the most easterly Canadian national park to have a wolf pack. Two packs with 5 to 10 members each roam the park and surrounding area. Their territories range from 500 to 700 square kilometres. Since this is bigger than 536-square-kilometre La Mauricie, the park is only part of their territory. The **Canada National Parks Act** protects them inside the park, but they're vulnerable to being hunted and trapped once they leave its boundaries. The wolf's presence in the park has become more sporadic in recent years.

Habitat and conservation

Eastern Wolves need large areas of deciduous, coniferous or mixed forests. It's protected by Quebec's **Act Respecting the Conservation and Development of Wildlife**, the **Canada National Parks Act** and Ontario's **Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act**. In 2004, the eastern wolf was included on the list of Species at Risk in Ontario with a status of Special Concern.



What Parks Canada is doing

La Mauricie National Park conducted a major study on eastern wolf ecology in partnership with the Université de Sherbrooke. The movements of 16 radio-collared wolves were studied. These wolves were part of four different packs that lived in the park and the region. The results confirmed that there's enough prey and habitat to meet the needs of the two wolf packs in the park and even allow for population growth. Yet, outside the park they are trapped or shot at a rate of about 32 per cent, which will likely result in a declining population. Their survival, therefore, depends on regional collaboration. Some of the steps that Parks Canada is taking include:

- 1 **developing a conservation strategy** for protecting Eastern Wolves inside and outside the park;
- 2 **creating a public awareness program** about the importance of wolves to the region's forest ecosystems;
- 3 **monitoring the two wolf packs** within the park to understand how they use their habitat inside and outside the park and to determine the long-term impact of human activity on wolf populations;
- 4 **raising awareness among** local communities and visitors through its Eastern Wolf education program that includes exhibits, speakers, a poster, mural, brochure and educational kit.

