

Yellowstone National Park announced the retirement of longtime lead wolf biologist Doug Smith on Monday.

During his 28-year career in the park, Smith devoted himself to advancing the mission of the National Park Service by restoring and studying the natural behaviors of **wolves** and predator-prey dynamics in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

In November 1994, he began his tenure in the park, just prior to the reintroduction of 41 **wolves** in 1995, and soon thereafter became the leader of the Yellowstone Wolf Project for 25 years. In addition to his wolf duties, starting in 2008 until the present, Smith oversaw the park's bird and elk programs.

Under Smith's stewardship, wolf numbers increased to 174 in about 16 packs before stabilizing between 80 and 125 **wolves** in seven to 10 packs over the last decade. Smith established one of the premier scientific monitoring and research programs in the world. He and his staff captured and collared more than 600 **wolves**, conducted more than 1,500 aerial flights, hiked or skied more than 20,000 miles, located wolf packs more than 52,000 times, recorded more than 35,000 hours of wolf behavior and examined more than 8,200 carcasses. This monitoring and research synergized a proliferation of scientific investigations about wildlife, habitats and ecosystem processes.

In addition, due to his expertise and passion, Smith became the public face of wolf recovery and conservation in North America and underscored for a worldwide audience that the reintroduction of **wolves** to Yellowstone was a remarkable achievement; it completed the restoration of native large carnivores in the ecosystem.

"The reintroduction of **wolves** to Yellowstone was one of the most extraordinary American wildlife conservation efforts of the 20th century," said Superintendent Cam Sholly. "Doug's leadership and expertise in the decades following the reintroduction have helped ensure this keystone species continues to thrive across the Yellowstone landscape. Doug epitomizes the very best of public service and we thank him for his incredible contributions to wildlife conservation in Yellowstone and around the globe."