# [***6 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT WOLVES***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:613K-H6J1-JCBF-S462-00000-00&context=1516831)

States News Service

October 19, 2020 Monday

Copyright 2020 States News Service

**Length:** 1104 words

**Byline:** States News Service

**Dateline:** WASHINGTON

**Body**

The following information was ***released by Defenders of Wildlife***:

As a top predator, wolves are essential to maintaining the health of many ecosystems around the world. With their piercing looks and melancholy howls, wolves inspire both admiration and controversy in North America.

While wolves used to roam the continent, from northern Canada to southern Mexico, by the early 1900s, humans almost entirely wiped them out in the lower 48 states. However, after the Endangered Species Act (ESA) became law in 1973, gray wolves have been slowly reintroduced into parts of the United States a" into places they used to call home. Gray wolves have now reoccupied an estimated 10% of their historical range in the lower 48 states.

Today we have exciting opportunities to continue wolf restoration in Colorado and California, to recover red wolves in the Southeast and to rebuild Mexican gray wolf populations in the Southwest. Defenders of Wildlife continues to fight for wolf restoration across six regions.

1. Southeast: We are at a tipping point in the preservation of the red wolf, the world's most endangered wolf species. The species used to range from southern New York to Florida, but now they are only found in the wild on a small spit of land in North Carolina. In 2013, more than 130 individuals were left after extensive conservation efforts by Defenders and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), but now fewer than 20 remain in the wild. In September 2020, Defenders joined other conservation organizations in threatening to sue FWS if it does not change its management efforts, mainly beginning to integrate captive wolves into the wild population. Learn more.

2. Northern Rocky Mountains: Wolves were first reintroduced to the Northern Rockies in 1995, in both Yellowstone National Park and Central Idaho. They have since expanded to occupy the entire region, helping restore the natural balance, and today number about 1,700. But human intolerance remains. Defenders works with livestock owners across the region on projects to reduce wolf-livestock conflicts and promote coexistence. These efforts are critical to increasing human tolerance and acceptance of wolves. However, much work remains to be done. For example, in Idaho, hunting and trapping of gray wolves has led to a concerning number of deaths. From July 2019 to June 2020, more than 570 wolves were killed, including pups just weeks old.

3. Pacific West: Wolves returned to Washington state and Oregon on their own from the newly-restored Northern Rockies population and from Canada beginning in 2008 and 2009 respectively, with approximately 300 individuals and 29 breeding pairs currently living between the two states. While these numbers are encouraging, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has issued several lethal removal orders for wolves each year, postponing statewide recovery and disincentivizing the use of effective non-lethal deterrents. Defenders works with agencies, ranchers and local communities in Washington and Oregon to provide and deploy conflict reduction tools, to prevent further lethal removal orders and to continue the growth of wolf populations throughout the region.

Wolves returned to California in late 2011, when a single male from Oregon became the first known wolf in the Golden State in nearly 90 years. Since then, only two wolf packs remain in the state.

4. Southern Rocky Mountains: In the Southern Rockies of Colorado, Defenders is working with allies to pass a ballot initiative to restore wolves to the state. If passed by the voters, Proposition 114 would require Colorado wildlife officials to reintroduce wolves to the state by the end of 2023 through a science-based plan with public input, the first ever endangered species reintroduction program determined by voters. With more than 17 million acres of public land and the nation's largest elk herd, the Southern Rockies of Colorado are arguably the best remaining suitable but unoccupied wolf habitat in the West. Coloradans also strongly support wolf restoration: a 2020 Colorado State University poll found 84% of Colorado voters support reintroducing wolves to the state.

5. Southwest: The Mexican gray wolf is the most endangered subspecies of wolf in the world. Mexican gray wolves are an important keystone species in the Southwest and Northern Mexico. They were first reintroduced to Arizona and New Mexico in 1998. While the species is making a valiant comeback, there are still many challenges they face, such as trapping, illegal killings, lethal removal orders and political inertia. Defenders works with local ranchers, landowners, Native American ***tribes*** and policymakers to ensure the Mexican gray wolf makes a steady comeback and will thrive in the wild throughout the region.

6. Alaska: Alaska has a fairly sizable wolf population, yet Alexander Archipelago wolves in Tongass National Forest need urgent protection. During last year's trapping season, 165 wolves, an estimated 97% of the population, were legally killed under new regulations that allowed wolf trappings. In August 2020, Defenders sued the U.S. Department of the Interior and National Park Service in a federal district court in Alaska to protect the Alexander Archipelago wolf population and ensure that this imperiled wolf population and Tongass National Forest, its forest habitat. Last month, Defenders and coalition partners sent a letter to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to ask that the agency close the trapping and hunting seasons for Alexander Archipelago wolves because of the record number of wolves that had been killed.

The return of wolves to areas across the lower 48 states has helped restore some of the natural balance that had been lost in their absence. Wolves are now once again causing elk and deer to move around the landscape more and allowing streamside vegetation to flourish along with species that depend on this restored habitat. Gray wolves taught us about the importance habitat connectedness, biodiversity and the role apex predators play in maintaining the balance in ecosystems. At a time when we are facing a catastrophic biodiversity crisis, it is more important now than ever to protect wolves and the habitats that depend upon them. Defenders of Wildlife will never stop fighting for wolves, wildlife and the habitats they call home.

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. With over 1.8 million members and activists, Defenders of Wildlife is a leading advocate for innovative solutions to safeguard our wildlife heritage for generations to come.

**Classification**

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newswire

**Subject:** WILDLIFE (93%); WILDLIFE CONSERVATION (92%); ENDANGERED SPECIES (90%); ENVIRONMENTAL & WILDLIFE ORGANIZATIONS (90%); MAMMALS (90%); CONSERVATION (89%); RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS (89%); MOUNTAINS (88%); ENVIRONMENTAL LAW (78%); NATIONAL PARKS (78%); PUBLIC LANDS REGULATION & POLICY (76%); US ENVIRONMENTAL LAW (76%); PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS (73%); LEGISLATION (71%); PUBLIC LANDS (70%); DEATH RATES (68%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (64%)

**Organization:** DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE (91%); US FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE (82%)

**Industry:** LIVESTOCK (78%); NATIONAL PARKS (78%); PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS (73%)

**Geographic:** ROCKY MOUNTAINS (93%); IDAHO, USA (92%); OREGON, USA (92%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); COLORADO, USA (79%); NEW YORK, USA (79%); NORTH CAROLINA, USA (79%); WASHINGTON, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (95%); CANADA (92%); MEXICO (92%); NORTH AMERICA (79%)

**Load-Date:** October 19, 2020

**End of Document**