

= Wolf : The Journey Home =

Wolf : The Journey Home , originally titled Hungry for Home : A Wolf Odyssey , is a 1997 American young @-@ adult novel written by ' Asta Bowen . Originally published by Simon & Schuster with line drawings by Jane Hart Meyer , it was retitled and reprinted without illustrations in 2006 by Bloomsbury Publishing . Based on true accounts of the Pleasant Valley , Montana , wolf pack , the novel traces the life of a female alpha wolf named Marta after the forced relocation of her pack in 1989 to an unfamiliar territory . Terrified , Marta abandons her pack and begins a journey in search of her home ; she eventually arrives in Ninemile Valley , where she finds a new mate with whom she starts a new pack .

Bowen was prompted to write the story of the relocated wolves after becoming outraged over the continued poaching of wolves in the protected areas of Ninemile Valley . She spent four years researching wolves while working on the novel . In recounting the fates of the animals at the end , she expresses hope in the ideals behind efforts to restore wolf populations . Nominated for a 2006 Teens ' Top Ten award by the American Library Association , the novel was praised by critics . Two praised Bowen 's ability to avoid anthropomorphism while capturing the essence of wolf behavior and life . Another also praised the story 's highlighting of the difficulties in wolf relocation programs .

= = Plot = =

Marta , a black gray wolf , is alpha female in a small pack in Pleasant Valley , Montana , that consists of her mate , Calef , their three pups Rann , Sula , and Annie , and a seven @-@ year @-@ old wolf named Oldtooth . One morning Calef is killed by poachers , leaving Marta and Oldtooth to try to feed and raise the pups on their own . Though an experienced hunter , Oldtooth is unable to bring down large game as he lost most of his teeth chewing a steel leg trap off his leg years ago . Once the cubs are old enough to be left alone for short periods of time , Marta takes over the bulk of the hunting . Though it is difficult , the two adults successfully keep all three cubs alive and begin weaning them and teaching them the ways of the wolf . In the summer , traps begin appearing in the area as human populations increase . Annie and Sula are caught and are taken away by humans , but reappear a few days later , locked in cages . Marta tries to free her pups but is unsuccessful ; however humans come regularly to keep them fed and ensure they have water . Oldtooth is later captured , while Marta is tranquilized from a helicopter . Rann escapes and is not seen again .

The wolves are kept in a human facility for a couple of months to be examined , and a wound on Oldtooth 's paw is treated . In early winter , the wolves are sedated again and awaken to find themselves in a strange high place with radio collars around their necks . Still groggy from the tranquilizer , the strangeness of the events and the smell of grizzly bear in the area triggers Marta 's flight instincts and she runs blindly downward , leaving Oldtooth and the cubs behind . When Oldtooth awakens , he quietly abandons Annie and Sula , following Marta 's trail , but at a much slower pace .

Marta continues running in the direction she believes will lead back to Pleasant Valley , swimming across Middle Fork River , crossing the nearby highway and railroad tracks , and running through various woodlands in between . Pausing only to drink water and tend her paws , she crosses Pyramid Peak and swims across the Hungry Horse Reservoir , before a week without food and exhaustion cause her to collapse on the shore . After resting , she continues her run , though hunger now spurs her to pause to hunt when she can but she eventually collapses by Flathead Lake , where she remains unconscious for days . Meanwhile , unskilled at hunting and without the adults to teach them how to survive , Annie and Sula slowly starve to death . Oldtooth reaches Middle Fork Valley , where illness and his lame foot drive him to hunt local livestock . He is shot and killed by a human .

When Marta recovers , her instincts to return home are dulled and she begins traveling more slowly . She makes her way through Swan Valley to cross the Swan Range and Mission Mountains . As winter settles in , she makes a winter home around Lindbergh Lake , where hunting is good and

humans few . Near the end of winter , she meets another lone wolf , Greatfoot , a large male . Initially they maintain their distance from one another , until Greatfoot hunts the elk herd in Marta 's range , specifically the aging leader that Marta favored and refused to hunt herself . She stops the other wolf 's hunt , and after a brief skirmish they forget the elk and become friendly . They form a pack of two and leave the area , heading south . After mating , their travels become more urgent to find a home to raise young .

They settle in Ninemile Valley , a large forested region that while inhabited by humans , has few roads and homes . Several weeks after they make their den , Marta gives birth to seven pups , though one dies shortly after birth . As spring arrives , the pups grow well under their parents care and begin making their first explorations outside of the den . In early summer , Marta leaves the den to hunt and is killed by a poacher . Greatfoot is left as the sole provider for the pups . Though they were not fully weaned , they soon learn to eat the meat their father provides and he slowly begins teaching them how to avoid humans and how to survive . The only human the pack ignores is a human scent they frequently find on their trails , as no human ever appears with it , only the occasional sound of a truck nearby .

Near the end of summer , Greatfoot is run over and killed while crossing a freeway during a hunt . The pups begin hearing a strange wolf howl , but when they track it they find a fresh kill and the familiar human scent . New kills appear every few days as the young wolves grow larger and stronger . One night when they hear the unusual howl , they are closer than usual to it and reach the kill in time to meet their benefactor , a human male . The pack stares at the man , before disappearing back into the forest , ignoring his howl . As he goes to leave , however , the six return to the edge of the clearing and howl .

= = Development and publication = =

According to Bowen , she was " not a wolf person " before penning *Wolf : The Journey Home* . A language arts teacher at Flathead High School in northwest Montana and a former op @-@ ed columnist for the Seattle Post @-@ Intelligencer , she stated that she read news reports about the Pleasant Valley wolf pack in the Daily Inter Lake , but it was the death of one of the Ninemile pups that spurred her to write the novel . In her words , it was " one death too many " from the many non @-@ accidental deaths of the wolves , and she felt the " story needed to be told " . She spent four years studying wolves in preparation for writing the novel , particularly the lives of a pack of wolves that were part of the federal wolf relocation program and who were documented in records kept by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service . The pack formed in the spring of 1989 in Pleasant Valley , Montana . As in the novel , the alpha male was killed , mistaken for a dog by a rancher , and the rest of the pack was trapped , except the one pup that escaped . They were held in Kalispell until they could be transferred to Glacier Park . Using radio collars , biologists were able to track the pack members from their release to their eventual fates , as depicted in the novel . The pups born to Marta and Greatfoot were born in Spring 1990 in Ninemile Valley , an area near Missoula . When they stopped receiving a signal for Marta , authorities searched for her body for weeks until her broken radio collar was found in a creek . Mike Jimenez , then a wildlife biologist and the Wyoming Wolf Recovery Project Leader , was the man in the blue truck who tracked and monitored the pack in the novel and fed the pups after the death of Greatfoot .

The novel , then titled *Hungry for Home : A Wolf Odyssey* , was first published by Simon & Schuster in hardback format on January 13 , 1997 . The first edition included ink illustrations by Jane Hart Meyer . The novel was reprinted in paperback format on January 30 , 1998 . The novel later went out of print , after enjoying modest success in the Netherlands . A few years later , Bowen 's attorney convinced her to rework the novel for young @-@ adult readers , and on December 27 , 2005 , Bloomsbury USA reprinted the edited novel with the new title of *Wolf : The Journey Home* in hardback format , without the illustrations of the previous edition and with a new photographic cover . The new edition of the novel has been translated and reprinted in China .

= = = Aftermath = = =

Jimenez stopped feeding the pups after Thanksgiving that same year . Though the pups learned to hunt , Silver and Pikuni left the pack and the other four began killing livestock . They were captured to be relocated , much as their parents had been . One , Camas , escaped after waking up from the tranquilizer early . Chinook was killed for continuing to hunt livestock and Timber was killed by a poacher . Tenino , who also continued hunting livestock , was recaptured and sent to Wolf Haven International , a sanctuary in Washington State , where he lived until his death in 2001 . The fates of the other cubs , as well as Rann , the cub who escaped the initial relocation , are unknown . In the epilogue of the novel , Bowen expresses hope that they survived and bred , enabling the bloodlines started with Marta and Greatfoot to continue in the wolf packs that now inhabit the area . Jimenez continued working as the Wyoming Wolf Recovery Project Leader for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service until 2008 , when he was selected to be the Wyoming Game and Fish Department 's Wolf Program Coordinator .

= = Reception = =

Wolf : The Journey Home was nominated for the 2006 Teens ' Top Ten award by the American Library Association . Publishers Weekly 's Sybil Steinberg called it a " powerful first novel " and a " genuinely eye @-@ opening tale " . She praised Bowen for " striving to inhabit the wild psyche of Marta with a minimum of anthropomorphic sentimentality , " and felt the author conveyed " both a reverence for the ways of the wild and a realistic grasp of wolves ' fear of humans . " Reviewing the title for The Detroit Free Press , Judy Rose considered it a " fact @-@ and @-@ fiction book " written " with a wolf 's @-@ eye view " . She praised the work 's factual basis and Bowen 's extensive research into the topic , and felt the novel 's release was " well @-@ timed " , coinciding with growing interest in wolf research and the reintroduction programs , particularly those at Yellowstone Park . While noting the novel is not for everyone , she felt it would be enjoyable to " wildlife lovers " and that readers will " howl with [the wolves] pain " . David Seideman of the Chicago Tribune considered the novel to be in the same " vein [as] the classic The Incredible Journey " , praising the author 's " faithfully [capturing of] their indomitable spirit " . He thought that " Bowen 's first @-@ rate skills as a nature writer keep her from falling off the edge into anthropomorphism " , though he criticized the scenes in which Marta refuses to hunt and even defends an old buck , feeling that she allowed " her sympathies to distort reality " and contradicted her own assertion that wolves are " always looking for an easy meal . " Jennifer Henderson , of the Booklist , found it to be a " memorable tale " that highlights the difficulties in reintroducing wolves even to protected areas . Calling it a " beautifully told wolf story " with a " tragic outcome " , she recommended the novel for teenage readers who love animals . In Gentle Reads : Great Books to Warm Hearts and Lift Spirits , Deanna McDaniel recommends the novel in her list of 500 inspiring stories for young adults , considering it to be an engaging and " vivid " tale of survival that contains a " strong message of hope " in the legacy Marta leaves behind .