

The following 8 brief descriptions were taken from the files of the Alaska Virology Laboratory. All of the wolves involved in these encounters tested negative for rabies, and none were known to be previously food conditioned or habituated to people. Instead, these wolves probably showed little fear of people simply because they were unfamiliar with people and were not conditioned to avoid people. Such encounters are common throughout remote areas of Alaska and Canada where human densities are low and wolves occupy relatively pristine habitats.

CASES 63–70 — Various Alaskan villages, 1971–2000.

Case 63: In February 1973 a wolf entered the town of Palmer and demonstrated little fear of people. There was no known human contact, but the wolf was shot and submitted for rabies testing.

Case 64: In 1974 a wolf appeared near the village of Bethel and was approached several times by people. The wolf showed no fear and was killed the following day.

Case 65: In 1976 a hunter encountered a wolf near Pilot Point, Alaska. The wolf did not show normal signs of fear and was killed by the hunter.

Case 66: In 1978 a wolf was scratching at a tent near Cold Bay, Alaska and would not be scared away. The animal was destroyed and skinned.

Case 67: In 1985 a wolf entered Arctic Village, Alaska. The wolf was unafraid and refused to leave the area. It was killed and submitted for rabies testing.

Case 68: In 1992 a wolf was seen wandering around the airport at King Salmon, Alaska. The airport manager shot it after he was unable to harass the wolf away from the airport.

Case 69: In 1994 a wolf peered into the window of a house in Dillingham, Alaska. The wolf seemed fearful, but curious. It did not flee before being killed.

Case 70: In 2000 a wolf walked up to a house in Chandalar, Alaska. It was reported to be unafraid and was killed by a local resident.

Source: Alaska State Virology Laboratory, unpublished files 1971–2000.

Investigative Approach Behavior

In most cases where nonhabituated wolves approached people in remote settings the wolves quickly retreated once they realized they were approaching humans. Often the people involved are not moving, and are bent over, sitting, or partially concealed. Other approach behaviors described below involved wolves that were habituated. In those cases wolves sometimes approached and then followed or paced alongside people that were walking (Cases 73 and 76).

CASE 71 — Denali National Park, Alaska, 2001.

On 5 July a motorist on the Denali Park Road saw a wolf standing in the road ahead of him. He stopped his vehicle and watched as the wolf howled and 2 other wolves joined it on the road. A man riding a bicycle then approached from behind the parked vehicle and stopped about 100 m from the wolves. One of the wolves walked toward the cyclist and sat down next to him, staring up at the man. A second wolf did the same, and the man put his bicycle between himself and the wolves. The third wolf then approached, continued past the man and into the brush alongside the road; the other 2 wolves eventually followed.

This incident occurred near a campground where wolves had previously approached tents. It was unknown whether the wolves involved in this incident were food conditioned, but they certainly displayed a high level of habituation. The approach and wait behavior seen in this case

is similar to cases of escort behavior (Cases 73 and 76) and lacked the aggressiveness displayed by wolves that were conditioned to receive frequent food handouts (Cases 1, 5, 10, 11 and 12).

Source: Jason Ransom and Ed Vorisek, National Park Service, Denali Park, Alaska, unpublished occurrence reports and personal communication.

CASE 72 — Denali National Park, Alaska, 2000.

A series of encounters in Denali Park during summer 2000 illustrate investigative approach behavior by wolves in different parts of the park, suggesting at least 2 different groups of wolves were involved in these encounters.

On 5 June 2000, 2 people were hiking along the Sanctuary River when they noticed a group of 6 or 7 caribou approximately 1 km from the river. They saw 1 caribou running with a large predator chasing it. Initially, they thought it was a bear but then realized it was a wolf. The wolf stopped chasing the caribou and began running toward the people at full speed. The wolf ran within 100 m, slowed to a walk, and approached the people. The people yelled and waved their hands. The wolf stopped, turned to the side, and then continued its approach. Despite the yelling and hand waving, the wolf approached to within about 10 m and then circled the people before continuing along the river.

On 17 June near Glacier Creek, 5 people on a day hike were lying down and resting when a gray wolf approached. The people noticed 2 other wolves ‘creeping’ up to them from the side. The people stood up when the wolves were less than 10 m away and the wolves retreated.

On 28 June near the Toklat River at the base of Divide Mountain, a number of backcountry campers were finishing their meal when they saw a wolf in the distance. The wolf noticed the people and changed direction toward them. It came within 50 m and was "wary" as it passed. After the wolf passed, a second, smaller brown wolf appeared behind the campers at a distance of only 5 m. The second wolf was reportedly "not aggressive, only inquisitive." The people yelled and threw rocks at this second wolf; it ran about 25 m before stopping to look back, and then it left the area.

Source: Jason Ransom and Ed Vorisek, National Park Service, Denali Park Alaska, unpublished occurrence reports and personal communication.

CASE 73 — Denali National Park, Alaska, 2000.

On 27 May a person was walking on a gravel bar near the Teklanika campground when a wolf approached to within 3 m. The witness described the encounter as follows: “I stopped and we checked each other out. I walked and he walked. I did this several times and he stayed right with me at about 5 feet. People came out and he trotted off toward my brother – did the same with him. Very docile, very curious, not aggressive at all. He just went off into the woods. Wow!”

Source: Jason Ransom and Ed Vorisek, National Park Service, Denali Park Alaska, unpublished occurrence reports and personal communication.

CASE 74 — Gravina Island, Alaska, 2000.

On 4 July, University of Alaska students Kris Larsen and Colleen Ianuzzi were walking across an open tide flat when they saw 7 wolves trotting toward them from a distance of about 400 m. The wolves picked up their pace at 100 m and ran across a small creek directly at the students. When the wolves were at approximately 30 m, one wolf abruptly stopped. The

remainder of the pack continued for a few more paces. For 20–30 seconds the wolves paced and shifted back and forth, some of them whimpering, all of them staring at Larsen and Ianuzzi. Eventually, the wolf that had stopped first, turned and trotted away; the remainder of the pack followed. Larsen and Ianuzzi watched for the next 20–30 minutes as the wolves searched along the edge of the tide flat. When the pack came to a spot where Larsen had seen several deer earlier in the day, the wolves suddenly darted into the trees and were lost from view.

This encounter is similar to one reported in Denali Park during June 2000 (Case 72). In both cases, the wolves appeared to be hunting when they detected, and then purposefully approached, people. In both cases the wolves stopped at close range, and in both cases the wolves lived in areas where they would commonly encounter people. It is impossible to know if the wolves approached what they thought were people or approached after mistakenly identifying the people as potential prey. In either case, these encounters illustrate investigative behavior of wolves that could be interpreted as aggressive by witnesses unfamiliar with this behavioral pattern.

Source: Kris Larsen, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, personal communication.

CASE 75 — 50 km north of Tasiujaq, Quebec, 1999.

In late August 1999 professional photographer Heiko Wittenborn was photographing caribou in a remote area of northern Quebec, 50 km north of the village of Tasiujaq. He was watching a bull caribou move toward him from a distance of about 500 m when the caribou briefly disappeared from sight behind intervening terrain and then suddenly appeared again being chased by 2 wolves. The wolves quickly gave up the pursuit and disappeared from Wittenborn's view. A few minutes later, Wittenborn saw 6 wolves near the shore of a nearby lake moving toward him from about 150 m. The man backtracked to put himself into a position on the wolves' line of travel, and he set his tripod on a well-worn caribou trail. When 2 of the wolves encountered the trail they turned uphill toward Wittenborn, the other 4 wolves moved out of view. The 2 wolves sniffed the ground as they trotted up the trail but appeared not to detect the man's presence until they were within 50 m. The lead wolf then looked directly at Wittenborn as it trotted toward him. When the wolf was about 20 m away, it adopted a slightly crouched posture but slowly continued walking and staring directly at the photographer who was standing quietly behind his tripod. When the wolf reached a distance of 3 m Wittenborn growled, "like the growl of a dog." The wolf appeared startled; it took a step backward and then began circling. The second wolf had lagged some distance behind and it also began a wide circle. The wolves maintained eye contact with Wittenborn as they circled at a distance of about 15 m. Then without looking back, the wolves trotted across the tundra and out of sight.

This approach behavior is similar to that described in other cases where apparently naïve wolves first encounter people at close range in remote settings. However, Wittenborn reported that at 3 m the wolf was still focused directly on his face and moving toward him. He felt that if he had not growled, thereby surprising the wolf, the wolf would have continued those last few steps.

Source: Heiko Wittenborn, Montreal, Quebec, personal communication.

CASE 76 — Pacific Rim National Park, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, 1999.

The same wolves were probably involved in both of the following encounters and park officials suspected these wolves sometimes foraged at nearby landfills. A pack of 9 wolves was

seen in the area on 1 March, but only 2–4 wolves were involved in each of the encounters described below.

In the late afternoon of 3 February, a woman was walking on a beach when 4 wolves approached and surrounded her at a distance of 3 m. The woman turned and began walking back along the beach toward the nearby Wickaninnish Visitor Center. The wolves walked beside her, keeping pace and occasionally approaching within 1 m. After a few minutes the wolves turned and traveled down the beach away from the woman, but then the wolves returned and followed beside her again for a short distance. Eventually the wolves lost interest, fell back, and disappeared from view.

The following morning a man and a woman were returning along a trail through the forest from a nearby beach when they saw 3 wolves traveling parallel to them in the brush only 3 m away. They reported the wolves were moving silently in a crouched position. By the time the couple reached the parking lot the wolves had disappeared from view.

During both of these encounters, the people did not attempt to scare the wolves with shouts or other threatening gestures. The wolves did not vocalize or act aggressively, and the people felt nervous but not threatened.

Source: Bob Hansen, Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, British Columbia, unpublished Warden Service occurrence reports.

CASE 77 — Great Falls, Manitoba, 1991.

In early January 1991 Stuart Jansson of Great Falls, Manitoba was checking his trapline about 100 miles northeast of Winnipeg. It was a clear night, the moon was full and the ground was snow covered. The temperature was -38°F . Jansson parked his truck on a remote road and when he emerged from the vehicle he heard wolves howling nearby to the north. His traps were set south of the road, and he walked off the road about 1 km to check his traps. Finding nothing in his traps Jansson returned toward his vehicle, but when he was approximately 300 m from his truck, he saw a wolf crossing his trail only 30 m behind and then saw 2 wolves, one on either side, also at a distance of about 30 m. For the next several minutes as Jansson walked, the wolves kept pace alongside him. When he approached his vehicle, 2 more wolves were waiting on the road and a third was standing on a hill a short distance away. The wolves retreated back into the brush when Jansson stepped onto the road. He believed the wolves had followed him because they had mistaken him for potential prey when they first heard him in thick brush. He was not carrying any lure or bait that would have attracted the wolves. Wolves in the area were hunted and trapped and commonly encountered people, so it is unlikely their behavior could be attributed to inexperience, unless the animals were pups of the year.

Source: Stuart Jansson, Great Falls, Manitoba, personal communication.

CASE 78 — Ungava Peninsula, Quebec, 1982.

In February 1982 Stuart Luttich and Maria Berger landed near a caribou carcass that was lying on the Larch River southwest of Kuujuaq, Quebec. Luttich remained near the running helicopter to examine the carcass and Berger walked upstream about 200 m to collect samples from leg bones that the wolves had scattered on the river. As Berger bent to examine a bone she saw a wolf emerge from the brush along the shoreline and then a second wolf emerged on the opposite shore. Both wolves trotted toward her and she shouted when they were still some distance away but they continued toward her. Luttich described the first wolf as approaching

Berger in a crouched stalking posture. When the wolf was 20–30 m away, Berger shouted again and waved a leg bone in the air. The wolf stopped, stood upright, and took a quick look at Berger before retreating back into the brush. Luttich reported he had seen 3 other wolves in the brush along the river shoreline only 30–40 m away, and they watched the biologists for several minutes before disappearing from view. Both Berger and Luttich described the wolves as curious and felt that because the sighting was in a remote location it was possible the wolves had not previously encountered people. Luttich and Berger had a similar experience the next year in a different area of Quebec (Case 79).

Source: Stuart Luttich (retired), Wildlife Research Division, Department of Tourism, Culture, and Recreation, Goose Bay, Newfoundland; and Maria Berger, Fairbanks Alaska, personal communication.

CASE 79 — Clearwater Lakes, Quebec, 1983.

Stuart Luttich and technician Maria Berger were investigating causes of caribou mortality near Clearwater Lakes in northern Quebec in February 1983. Their helicopter overflew a lone wolf feeding on a caribou carcass and landed at another caribou carcass within 200–300 m. The helicopter did not appear to frighten the wolf and the wolf continued to feed.

After Luttich and his crew had examined the dead caribou they returned to the helicopter and then saw the wolf trotting toward them with its head up and tail out. The wolf continued to approach in what Luttich described as a nonthreatening manner until within 5–10 m from the field crew of 4 people. The helicopter was running, but the noise of the engine and movement of the rotors did not appear to deter the wolf's advance. The wolf suddenly stopped and sniffed the air. It turned back, rather hesitantly, toward the caribou carcass, peering over its shoulder to watch the people as it retreated.

Source: Stuart Luttich (retired), Wildlife Research Division, Department of Tourism, Culture, and Recreation, Goose Bay, Newfoundland; and Maria Berger, Fairbanks, Alaska, personal communication.

CASE 80 — Northern Saskatchewan, 1983.

In March, biologists Frank Miller, Anne Gunn, and Tim Trottier conducted caribou composition counts in northern Saskatchewan. After their helicopter landed near a group of caribou, the workers set up a spotting scope to observe the caribou. Trottier walked away from the other 2 biologists in an attempt to circle the caribou group, hoping the animals would drift closer to the spotters. When he was about 300 m from Miller and Gunn, Trottier sat down on a snow-covered hummock. He soon noticed a single approaching wolf, and as the wolf came closer it lowered its head, began a circular approach, and maintained eye contact with Trottier. When the wolf was within 10 m, Trottier stood up. Immediately the wolf stopped and then retreated. Trottier later discovered that he was sitting on a wolf-killed caribou that had been drifted over by snow.

Source: Tim Trottier, Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management, La Ronge, Saskatchewan, personal communication.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Support for this research was provided by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Study 14.0) through the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Sixty-two people contributed information that allowed me to compile this case history (Appendix). I am grateful for their willingness to share their experiences. B Dale, A Magoun, S Peterson, and D Person reviewed drafts of this technical bulletin and provided helpful comments. LA McCarthy and MV Hicks provided assistance with technical editing and publication.

LITERATURE CITED

- ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY. 2000. Alaska Investigative Report Case # 00-29108. Juneau, Alaska, USA.
- ALGONQUIN PROVINCIAL PARK. 1997. The best wolf is a wild one (part one). The Raven Visitor's Newsletter. Volume 38, Number 9.
- . 1999. A wolfian trilogy part 2: Thinking things through. The Raven Visitor's Newsletter. Volume 40, Number 5.
- CHAPMAN RC. 1978. Rabies: decimation of a wolf pack in Arctic Alaska. *Science* 201:365–367.
- FOLLMANN EH, RA DIETERICH, AND JL HECHTEL. 1980. Recommended carnivore control program for the northwest Alaskan pipeline project including a review of human–carnivore encounter problems and animal deterrent methodology. Institute of Arctic Biology, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska, USA.
- FOX MW. 1971. Behaviour of wolves, dogs and related canids. Harper and Row, New York, New York, USA.
- HAYES RD AND JR GUNSON. 1995. Status and management of wolves in Canada. Pages 21–33 in LN Carbyn, SH Fritts, and DR Seip, editors. Ecology and conservation of wolves in a changing world. Canadian Circumpolar Institute, Occasional Publication 35.
- HUNTINGTON S. 1993. Shadows on the Koyukuk: an Alaskan Native's life along the river — by Sidney Huntington as told to Jim Rearden. Alaska Northwest Books, Anchorage, Alaska, USA.
- JENNESS SE. 1985. Arctic wolf attacks scientist — a unique Canadian Incident. *Arctic* 38(2):129–132.
- MECH LD. 1970. The wolf: The ecology and behavior of an endangered species. Natural History Press, Garden City, New York.
- . 1990. "Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?" *Audubon* 92(2):82–85.
- MUNTHE K AND JH HUTCHISON. 1978. A wolf–human encounter on Ellesmere Island, Canada. *Journal of Mammalogy* 59(4):876–878.

- PETERSON RL. 1947. A record of a timber wolf attacking a man. *Journal of Mammalogy* 28(3):294–295.
- RAUSCH R. 1958. Some observations on rabies in Alaska, with special reference to wild Canidae. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 22(3):246–260.
- RUDIN N. 1997. Dictionary of modern biology. Barron’s Educational Series. Hauppauge, New York, USA.
- RUTTER RJ AND DH PIMLOTT. 1968. The world of the wolf. JB Lippincott, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.
- SCOTT PA, CV BENTLEY, AND J WARREN. 1985. Aggressive behavior by wolves toward humans. *Journal of Mammalogy* 66(4):807–809.
- UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR. 2000. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; proposal to reclassify and remove the gray wolf from the list of endangered and threatened wildlife in portions of the conterminous United States; proposal to establish three special regulations for threatened gray wolves. Federal Register 65: 43450–43496.
- YOUNG SP. 1944. The wolves of North America, Part I their history, life habits, economic status, and control. Dover Publication, Inc., New York, USA.



Photo by Jason Ransom

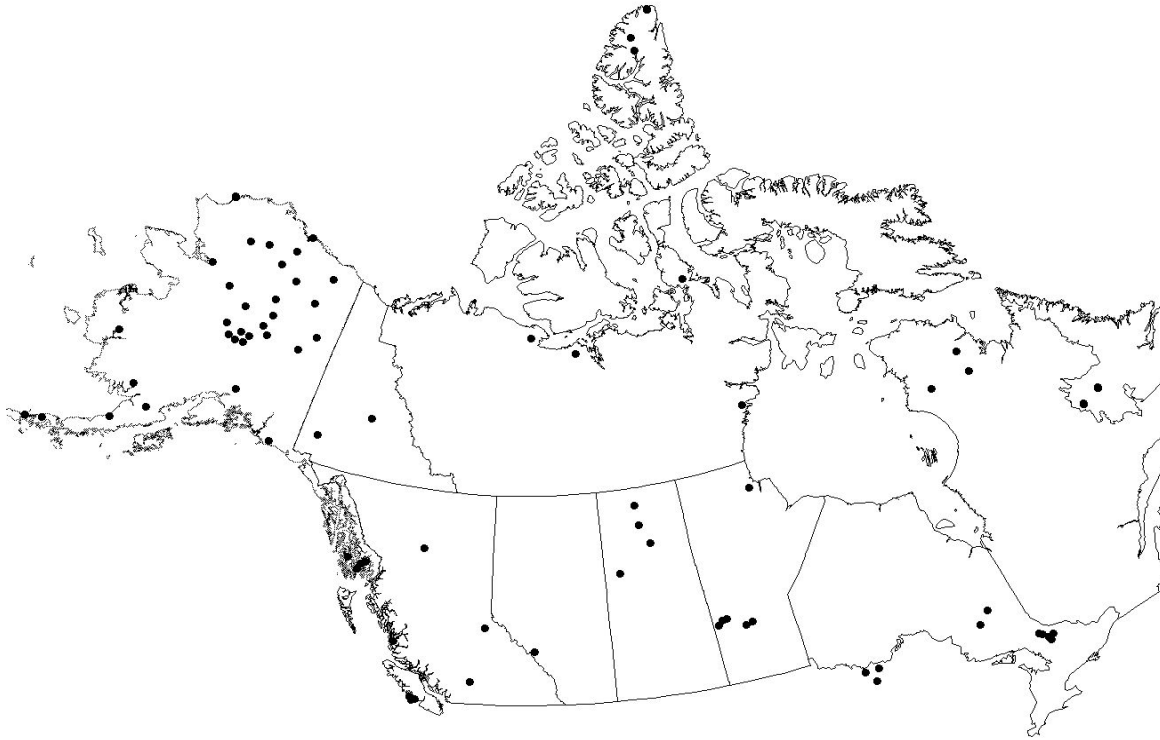


Figure 1 Geographic distribution of 80 wolf–human encounters described in the case history. Clusters of encounters in central Alaska, southeastern Ontario, southwestern Manitoba, and on Vancouver Island are associated with National or Provincial Parks. The higher density of encounters in northern Alaska resulted from a combination of wolf research activities, the trans-Alaska pipeline, rabies, and nonaggressive encounters near remote villages.

APPENDIX People who contributed information or references for the case history

Name	Contributors occupation or role in case history investigation	Location
Adams, Layne	Wildlife Biologist	Alaska
Arsenault, Al	Wildlife Biologist	Saskatchewan
Austin, Matt	Wildlife Biologist	British Columbia
Baer, Al	Wildlife Biologist	Yukon
Bekker, Jur	Area Supervisor	British Columbia
Berger, Maria	Wildlife Biologist	Alaska
Blake, Douglas	Conservation Officer	Labrador
Bradford, Wes	Wildlife Biologist	Alberta
Cloward, Marc	State Trooper	Alaska
Darimont, Chris	Wildlife Biologist	British Columbia
De Almeida, Maria	Wildlife Biologist	Ontario
Doidge, Bill	Wildlife Biologist	Quebec
Doidge, Eric	Conservation Officer	Nunavut
Flath, Randy	Wildlife Biologist	Alberta
Gardner, Craig	Wildlife Biologist	Alaska
Greenblatt, Andy	Hunting Guide/Pilot	Alaska
Hansen, Bob	Park Warden	British Columbia
Hayes, Bob	Wildlife Biologist	Yukon
Jansson, Stuart	Trapper	Manitoba
Jeffers, Bill	Environmental Officer	Alaska
Kowal, Ed	Wildlife Biologist	Saskatchewan
Larsen, Kris	Student	Alaska
Lawrence, Roy	Witness	Alaska
Lay, Al	Conservation Officer	British Columbia
Luttich, Stuart	Wildlife Biologist	Labrador
MacInnes, Charlie	Wildlife Biologist	Ontario
McAllister, Karen	Wildlife Biologist	British Columbia
McKay, Andy	Conservation Officer	British Columbia
McKay, Ian	Wildlife Biologist	Manitoba
Mooney, Phil	Habitat Biologist	Alaska
Mulders, Robert	Wildlife Biologist	NWT
Mullin, Tabitha	Conservation Officer	Nunavut
Nordberg, Samantha	Witness	Alaska
Otto, Robert	Wildlife Biologist	Labrador
Paquet, Paul	Wildlife Biologist	Saskatchewan
Peers, Glenn	Park Warden	Alberta, Banff
Person, David	Wildlife Biologist	Alaska
Piorkowski, Bob	Fisheries Biologist	Alaska
Porter, Boyd	Wildlife Biologist	Alaska
Ransom, Jason	Wildlife Technician	Alaska
Ritter, Don	Microbiologist	Alaska
Roe, Dennis	Conservation Officer	Alaska
Rosatte, Rick	Wildlife Biologist	Ontario

Name	Contributors occupation or role in case history investigation	Location
Schafer, James	Wildlife Biologist	Labrador
Schwantje, Helen	Veterinarian	British Columbia
Simpson, Carol	Witness	Alaska
Stenglein, Diane	Witness	Alaska
Stephenson, Bob	Wildlife Biologist	Alaska
Strickland, Dan	Park Naturalist	Ontario
Stronks, Rick	Park Naturalist	Ontario
Sundquist, Lance	Regional Enforcement Manager	British Columbia
Szepanski, Michelle	Wildlife Biologist	Alaska
Thompson, Teresa	Witness	Alaska
Treichel, Bruce	Wildlife Biologist	Alberta
Trottier, Tim	Wildlife Biologist	Saskatchewan
Valkenburg, Pat	Wildlife Biologist	Alaska
Vatamaniuck, Murray	Conservation Officer	British Columbia
Vorisek, Ed	Wildlife Technician	Alaska
Williams, Mark	Wildlife Biologist	British Columbia
Windh, Jacqueline	Photographer	British Columbia
Wittenborn, Heiko	Photographer	Quebec
Wright, Al	Pilot	Alaska

N

OTES



NOTES

