(39) WOLVERINES AND HUMANS ON THE KENAI PENINSULA, ALASKA: EVALUATING SPATIAL USE PATTERNS AND POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

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Abstract: Wolverines (*Gulo gulo*) function as scavengers and predators in the ecosystem of southcentral Alaska. They are generally not present at high densities but are important as a furbearer for human use and as a potential indicator of ecosystem health. Wolverines seem to prefer foothills and mountainous areas, which are not heavily developed but are often favored areas for recreation. In the Upper Turnagain Arm and Kenai Mountains, wolverines can be harvested under hunting and trapping regulations. This area also is used heavily for recreational snow machining and skiing, which have both increased rapidly in popularity in recent years. Because wolverine population density and reproductive potential is low, it is important for management agencies to closely monitor wolverine populations and those human activities that could adversely affect them. We analyzed recreation areas for distribution of skiers, snowmobilers, and other activities. We surveyed by aircraft five priority areas for wolverine distribution and conducted a density estimate using the sample unit probability estimation (SUPE) technique, which is based on wolverine track counts in winter. We mapped current dispersed and proposed recreation areas and evaluated harvest data from 1985–2002 to evaluate their extent and potential effect on wolverine distribution and density.

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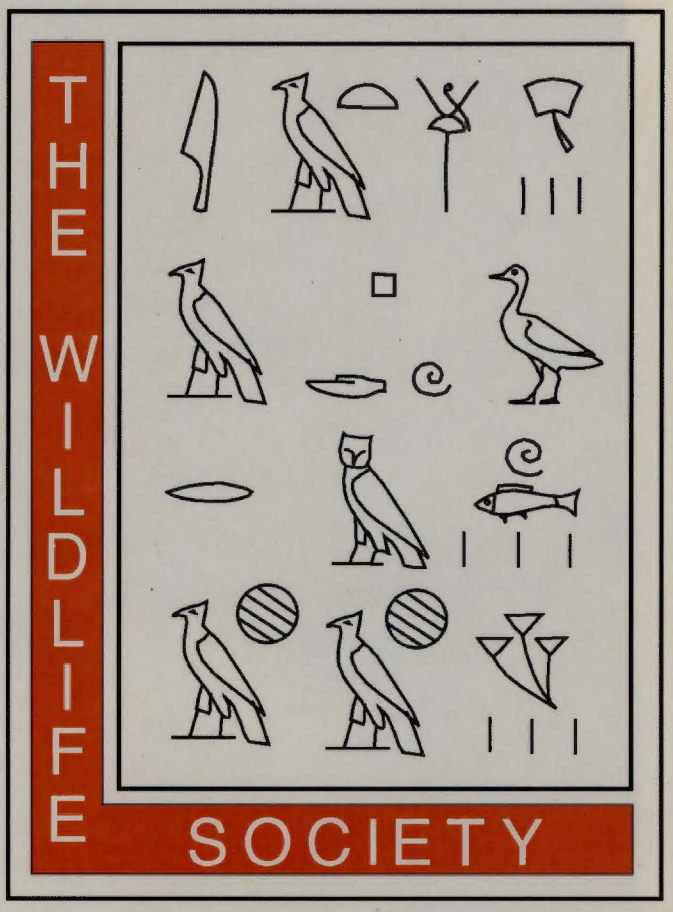

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