

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Wolves: True Wilderness Animals

By Guy Belleranti



Our tour bus rattles around a bend on the bumpy dirt road in Alaska's magnificent Denali National Park. Suddenly, we see wolves off to our left!

"The large black one is the alpha male," our guide says. "The one next to it is the alpha female."

Wolves are the largest members of the canidae family, but have you

noticed how similar they look to domesticated dogs? It's because dogs are members of the canidae family too! Wolves and dogs are closely-related species. Wolves, however, are carnivores with jaws that are twice as strong as a dog's.



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small animals like rabbits and mice.

Packs grow and change over time. Large, younger members move into alpha positions. Others leave to find a mate and start a new pack.

Like domesticated dogs, wolves communicate with their faces, body postures, various sounds, and scent markings. They communicate aggression by showing their teeth and growling. They indicate submission by rolling on their back.

Wolves' famous howls may sound sad, but they're often songs of celebration. Howls

can signal the beginning of a hunt, a successful hunt, or an end to a period of play. The howls also warn other packs to stay out of their territory.

Wolves have keen senses. They're also very strong, and they can run in short bursts of 40 miles an hour. They live in many climates and habitats, including hot deserts and the cold arctic tundra.

Gray wolves are the most common species of wolves. There are various subspecies of gray wolves, and their populations are widespread across North America. Wolves that live in the northern tundra and arctic sometimes weigh over 130 pounds. A second, smaller species, the red wolf, is a critically endangered species. Fewer than 150 remain in the wild.



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U.S. government made laws protecting them. Wolves were reintroduced into wild places and brought back into national parks like Yellowstone. Scientists learned that wolves create a balance between predator and prey. This balance creates healthier ecosystems for both plants and animals.

Wolves are wild animals, but there's no need to fear them. They want to avoid people and are true wilderness animals.

## About the Author



Guy Belleranti is an author of fiction, poetry, articles, puzzles, and humor for children and adults. He also works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo. Predators include tarantulas, centipedes, lizards, owls, bats, shrews and mice.

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1. Based on the information you read in the article, which of the following choices best describes the alpha male and alpha female in a wolf pack?
  - a. The alpha pair do all the hunting for the pack.
  - b. The alpha pair produce the offspring and are in charge of the pack.
  - c. The alpha male and female are the most aggressive wolves in the pack.
  - d. The alpha male and female are the oldest wolves in the pack.
2. Which of the following statements about wolves and domesticated dogs is NOT true?



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4. Which of the following statements best describes red wolf populations?
  - a. Red wolves are the most common species of wolves.
  - b. A red wolf can grow up to 130 pounds.
  - c. Red wolves can be found in the northern tundra regions.
  - d. Red wolves are a critically endangered species.
5. What has the U.S. government done to help wolf populations since their decline?

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Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage with the correct definition.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. keen

a. loathe or hate

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. revere

b. hostile or violent behavior

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. despise

c. wild, uncultivated lands



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\_\_\_\_\_ 7. endangered

g. sharp or highly developed

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. predator

h. an animal that gets eaten by other animals

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. prey

i. have a lot of respect or admiration for something

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. wilderness

j. dominant animal in a group

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In the article, "Wolves: True Wilderness Animals," you learned that wolves live in groups called packs. The wolves benefit from living in packs by using teamwork to hunt, taking turns watching over the pups, and providing one another with socialization, such as when they play together.



Choose another animal that lives in a group. Describe three benefits that animal receives from living in the group. If you use the Internet with a teacher or parent's permission, be sure to write the web address of the site you used to gather information at the bottom of this page.



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## ANSWER KEY

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1. Based on the information you read in the article, which of the following choices best describes the alpha male and alpha female in a wolf pack? **b**
- a. The alpha pair do all the hunting for the pack.
  - b. The alpha pair produce the offspring and are in charge of the pack.**

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into the wild, including national parks like Yellowstone.

## ANSWER KEY

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Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage with the correct definition.

**g** 1. keen

**a.** loathe or hate

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**c** 10. wilderness

**j.** dominant animal in a group

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