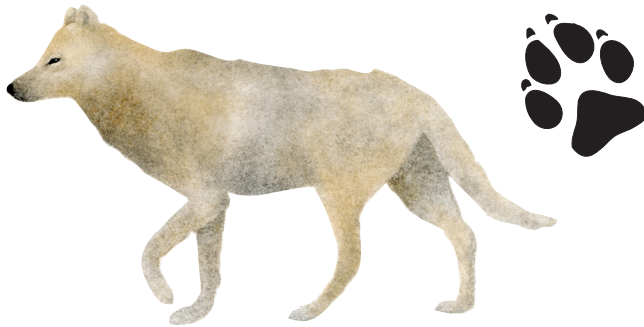




GREY WOLF

Canis lupus



Appearance

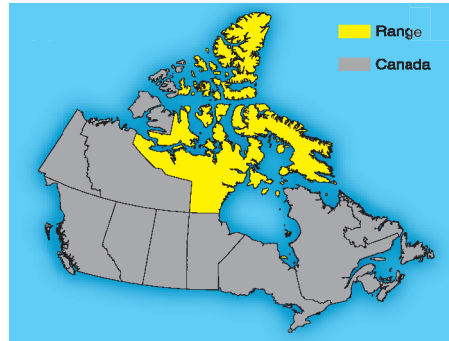
The grey wolf looks a lot like a sled dog but it has longer legs, bigger feet and a narrower chest. It varies in colour from snow white to jet black and can be all shades of grey, cream, brown and orangy black. The wolf has a thick coat made up of long rough guard hairs and short soft underfur. Females weigh between 30 and 35kg and males weigh between 35 and 40kg.

Food And Feeding

Wolves that live on the tundra feed mostly on caribou and muskox, depending on availability. Within the tree line, they hunt bison, moose, deer and caribou. Although wolves hunt mostly big game their diet may also include hares, foxes, small rodents, beaver, fish, birds, eggs and even small amounts of grasses or other vegetable matter.

Behaviour

Wolves are very social animals and have a complex hierarchy within their pack structure. There is generally a dominant or alpha pair in every pack. This pair will mate and every member of the pack will help them raise the young pups. Wolf packs travel, hunt, breed, raise pups and in most cases take care of a home territory together. Wolves are known to howl alone and with others for different reasons. A howl may be a call for adults to get together and hunt or a way to find a lost pup. It might also be that wolves just like to howl. People who have watched wolves howling say it looks like they are having fun. Wolves have a great sense of smell and excellent hearing but their eyesight is not as keen. Wolves use the same dens for generations, unless they are disturbed, in which case they abandon the den completely and never return to it.



Range

Wolves are found throughout Nunavut.

Habitat

Wolves show little preference for special habitats. They are found on the arctic tundra and on plains, as well as in forests in

their southern ranges.

Reproduction

When female wolves come into heat in late winter the wolves are very active and social which means there is a lot of howling. The gestation period is about 2 months and a bitch can have anywhere between 2 and 10 pups per litter. At birth, the pups are blind and deaf. They weigh about 0.5kg and are completely dependant on their mother. For the first 3 weeks of life, the pups stay in the den and they do not travel very far during their first summer. Making sure the pups are well fed takes a lot of time and the pack is very busy during the pups' first summer. They have been known to travel hundreds of kilometers in search of food for the pups. A wolf family may stay together for many years, hunting and traveling as a pack. When wolves reach maturity and are ready to mate, they may disperse and go in search of a new pack or a partner to start their own pack.

Status Survival and Management

According to the Nunavut Wild Species 2000 report, the current status of wolves is sensitive. Wolves generally live 10 years in the wild and up to 18 in captivity. In Nunavut, predators include humans, and pups are vulnerable to bears and raptors.

Did You Know?

Scientists continue to debate whether there is a difference between arctic island wolves, tundra wolves and timber wolves. Wolf skulls from different regions are sent in and the DNA is analyzed to see what differences and similarities there are between these wolves in order to help them identify any subspecies.

