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Doug Smith: *Wild Wolves of Yellowstone*

Student Presentation Study Guide

April 28, 2025 at 10:15 am

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons



Doug Smith

Doug Smith served as a wildlife biologist at Yellowstone National Park for nearly three decades and studied everything from beavers to birds. Most importantly, he led the Yellowstone Wolf Project, which reintroduced gray wolves to the park. He's written numerous scientific publications and has been featured in four National Geographic television specials. He has also written and edited several books about the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, including the 2023 book: *Yellowstone's Birds: Diversity and Abundance in the World's First National Park*.

Doug Smith Resources:

[History of Yellowstone Wolves with Doug Smith](#)

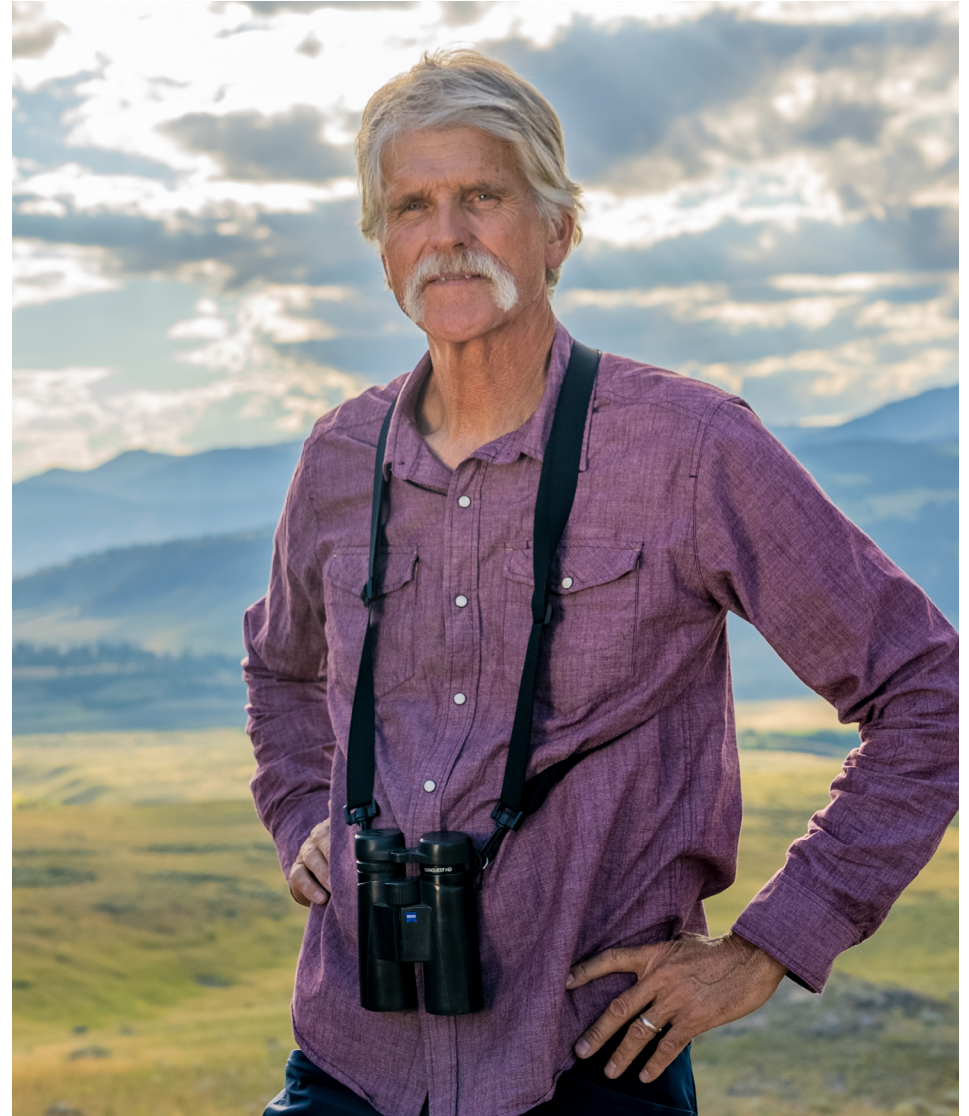
Greater Yellowstone Coalition.
YouTube. April 9, 2012

[Doug Smith Profile](#)

National Geographic

[Wolves 101](#)

National Geographic. Video



PAWS AND PONDER

QUESTIONS TO START CONNECTION

How do wolves fit into their ecosystems?

What do wolves tell us about ecosystems?

What other animals are like wolves in their ecosystems?

What do wolves tell us about family connections?

What does a howl sound like? Can we howl together?

What stories do we tell about wolves?

How do wolves behave? Why do we think that?

A wolf can run 64 km/h.

There are 27 types of wolves.

Wolves are apex predators, at the top of their food chain, without natural predators of its own.

Wolves howl to

- strengthen bonds within the pack
- allow wolves to communicate over long distances,
- act as a warning to outsiders to stay away.
- plus more!

A pack is usually 2-20 wolves.

LOCAL LINKS

Wolves in Alberta

In Alberta, wolves are found in mountain, foothill and boreal regions. Wolves can live anywhere there is enough prey, a safe site to den and little interference from people.

If you see a wolf that's far away

- Leave it an escape route.
- Don't approach the wolf
- Don't offer it food or entice it to come closer.

If the wolf is closer than a soccer field away or growls and snarls:

- Show the wolf that you are not easy prey. Make yourself look bigger by waving your arms over your head.
- Make noise and throw rocks, sticks or other objects at the wolf.
- Back away slowly, watching for a place of safety. Don't turn your back on the wolf.

Source: [Alberta. Wolves and outdoor recreation. 2025](#)

Other Ways of Knowing Wolves

In legends and traditional stories, wolf is known as Makoyi, or Makoyiwa to the Blackfoot people. Wolves are highly social animals that live in tight-knit packs, relying on each other for support and protection. The Blackfoot people view the wolf as an example of how relationships should be nurtured and cherished. The wolf also symbolizes adaptability and resilience. It teaches the Blackfoot people to navigate through life's changes and challenges with strength and grace. The wolf's keen senses and hunting skills are admired by the Blackfoot people, reminding them to stay attuned to their surroundings and trust their instincts.

Makoyohsokoyi (The Wolf Trail)

Makoyiwa, the wolves, were some of the first Earth Beings to help us.

One winter, when our people were starving, a young man and his family were camped by themselves as they searched for food. The wolves found the family and appeared to them as young men bringing fresh meat to the lodge. The wolves took this family with them, showing the man how to cooperate with other people when he hunted buffalo and other animals. The wolves introduced the people to the other animals in their world. The human beings learned that animals with hooves and horns were all right to eat, but that animals with paws and claws should be left alone.

The wolves disappeared in the spring, but we still see them in the sky as makoyohsokoyi, the Wolf Trail (the Milky Way). These stars constantly remind us of how we should live together.

Source: [Glenbow Museum - Traditional Stories](#)

[Howl of Understanding: Getting to know the Timber Wolf](#)

Wild Canada for Kids. Youtube. October 22, 2023

[Regions of the Province you might See Wolves | Know Alberta](#)

LOCAL LINKS

Reintroducing Bison to Banff

Starting in 2017, Banff National Park embarked on a project to restore the ecological role of bison in the park. Like the work that Doug Smith conducted in Yellowstone National Park, this was complex undertaking that has proven that ambitious restoration efforts are possible. The return of the Bison was considered a historic, ecological, and cultural triumph. The reintroduction was part of Canada's 150th anniversary year.

[Bison Reintroduction Project](#)

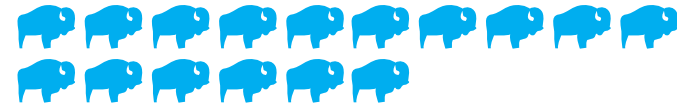
[Episode 1: The Herd Returns – Banff National Park](#)

Parks Canada. Youtube. July 3, 2019.

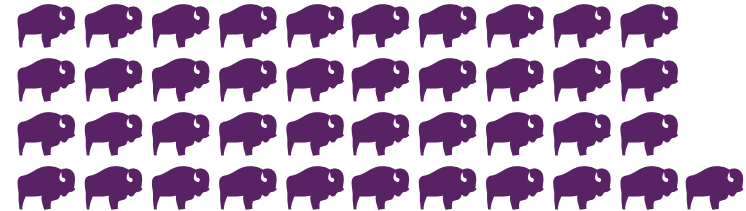
[Bison Reintroduction Project - Banff National Park](#)

[Yamnuska Wolfdog Sanctuary](#)

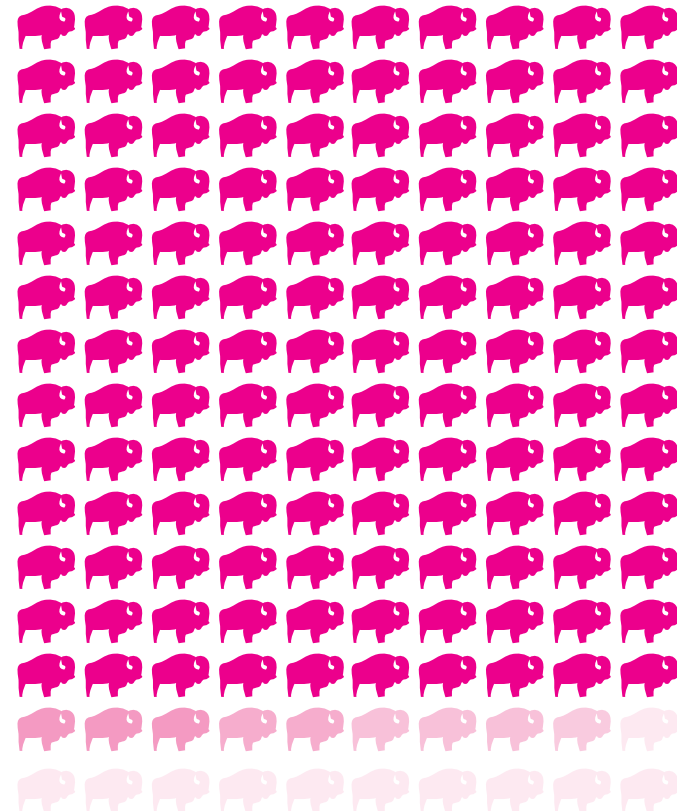
2017 - 16 bison arrive in Banff



2018 - 31 bison released into Banff



2024 - 130+ bison counted in Banff



Source: [Parks Canada. Bison blog - Banff National Park](#)

Howling Vocabulary

Apex Predator	A species at the top of the food chain, with no predators of its own. Also called an alpha predator or top predator.
Biologists	A scientist who specializes in biology. Biology is the study of living things, such as plants, animals, cells, and bacteria.
Carnivore	An organism that eats meat.
Conservation	The management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect.
Ecology	A branch of biology that studies the relationship between living organisms and their environment.
Ecosystem	A community and interactions of living and nonliving things in an area.
Food Web	All related food chains in an ecosystem. Also called a food cycle.
Grey Wolf	A mammal related to the dog.
Herbivore	An organism that eats mainly plants and other producers.
Hierarchy	If things or people are arranged in a hierarchy, they are organized from top to bottom, according to their rank or different characteristics. Some are at the top, some are in the middle, and some are at the bottom.
Interconnected	To connect or cause to be connected one to the other or others.
Keystone species	An organism that has a major influence on the way its ecosystem works.

National Park	A scenic or historically important area of countryside protected by the federal government for the enjoyment of the general public or the preservation of wildlife.
Omnivore	An omnivore is an animal that has the ability to eat and survive on both plant and animal matter.
Predator	An animal that hunts other animals for food.
Prey	An animal that is hunted and eaten by other animals.
Reintroduce	To return members of a species to their historical range.
Social Creatures	Are creatures who are living in groups or communities instead of alone.
Trophic Cascade	An ecological phenomenon triggered by the addition or removal of predators from an environment.
Trophic level	One of three positions on the food chain: autotrophs (first), herbivores (second), and carnivores and omnivores (third).
Yellowstone National Park	A large national park in the U.S. states of Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana.

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