**The Gray Wolf**



Brandon Hill

**Size and Life Span**

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* **Largest wild dog species**
* **Males are usually larger than female**
	+ **50 - 176 pounds**
	+ **34 inches to 51 inches**
* **May live 13 years in the wild**
	+ **Average is 5-6 years**
* **May live to be 15 years old in captivity**

**Coat**

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* **Depends on where they live**
* **White in the Arctic’s to white and gray, brown, cinnamon and black**
* **Their upper parts are usually darker and lighter on their bellies**
* **Their tail is tipped with black**
* **They have a thick under fur layer that acts like insulation**
	+ **Like a winter coat**

**Habitat**

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* **Wide variety of habitats**
	+ **Arctic tundra to forest, prairie, and arid landscapes**

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**Having a family**

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* **Females choose their mate and form a lifelong bond**
* **The female digs a den to have a raise the puppies in**
	+ **Can have between 5 – 14 pups**
		- **Usually only has 7**

**Behavior**

* **Wolves are very social**
* **They live in packs**
	+ **Packs = 2 – 36 wolves**
		- **The size of the pack depends on habitat and the amount of food.**
		- **Territory of a pack ranges from 130 – 13,000 square kilometers and is protected against intruders**
	+ **Most packs are made of 5 – 9 wolves**
		- **The alpha male and female and their kids**

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* **Very dominant**
	+ **Have ranks or positions in their packs**
		- **1. Alpha male, 2. Alpha female,**
	+ **A wolf’s rank in its pack determines which mate and which eat first.**

**Communication**

* **By body language and facial expressions**
	+ **Crouching, chin touching, rolling over to show their stomach**

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* **Vocalizations**
	+ **Howling**
		- **Where they are**
		- **When they should meet for pack hunts**
		- **Tell other packs where the boundaries of their territories are**



* **Scent marking**
	+ **Done by the alpha male**
		- **To communicate with other packs**

**Prey**

* **Wolves are carnivores.**
* **They hunt on their own, in packs, steal the prey of other predators, or scavenge carrion.**
* **They find their prey by chance or scent.**
* **What they eat depends on where they live and what is available to them.**
* **They hunt in packs for large prey**
	+ **Moose, elk, bison, musk oxen, and reindeer**
* **They hunt alone for smaller prey**
	+ **Beavers, rabbits, and other smaller mammals**

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* **Usually eat entire carcass**
* **Wolves may eat livestock and garbage when it is available.**

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**Being the prey**

* **Few animals prey on gray wolves**
	+ **They are top predators**
* **Wolves and coyotes are highly territorial. Wolves from other packs and coyotes will attack wolves that are alone or young. They will kill the pups if they find them.**

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**Humans are wolves’ greatest enemy**

**Endangered**

* **U.S. Federal list**
	+ **Endangered**
* **State of Michigan List**
	+ **Threatened**
* **By the early part of this century man had almost wiped the wolf from the lower 48 states**
	+ **About 2,600 exist now**
		- **2,000 in Minnesota**
* **The main cause of the decline in wolf numbers has been habitat destruction and humans killing them.**
* **Successful plans to rebuild the numbers has increase population**
	+ **Alaska: 6,000-8,000**
	+ **Canada: about 50,000**

**Classification**

**Kingdom: Animalia**

**Phylum: Chordate**

**Class: Mammalia**

**Order: Carnivora**

**Family: Canidae**

**Genus Species: Canis lupus**