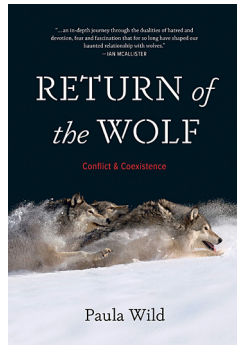


ZOOLOGY

Return of the Wolf: Conflict and Coexistence

By Paula Wild. 2018. Douglas and McIntyre. 272 pages, 32.95 CAD, 29.95 USD, Cloth.

Return of the Wolf by Paula Wild was an easy, enjoyable read about the recovery and return of wolves (*Canis* spp.) throughout the world, focussing much of her time in her home country of Canada studying Gray Wolves (*Canis lupus*). The purpose of the book is to give the real picture of wolves, as neither saint nor sinner nor good versus bad, but rather just another animal (albeit a predator that often conflicts with humans where the two are sympatric) trying to survive in an increasingly human-dominated landscape. Wild provides an historical summary of wolves in both the Old World as well as the New World, given that they were once common throughout North America and Eurasia. Chapters 2 and 3 describe how bounties and organized hunts had drastically reduced their numbers worldwide by the 1900s. However, the wolf is now recovering from near extermination in many areas, especially parts of the United States' lower 48 states, and is becoming more common as evidenced by their recovery in the Yellowstone area (p. 149) and upper mid-west. Throughout the book, Wild expresses amazement at the dualities of hatred and love that she encountered when ascribing emotions about wolves in her mission to set the record straight by letting us appreciate the real animal. I have over 50 books on wolves—not even counting the 25+ I have on their close cousin the Coyote, *Canis latrans*—and I feel like this book is an appropriate summary of all those books. It provides much of the historical background of, say, Barry Lopez's 1978 *Of Wolves and Men* (Scribner, 2004), but also discusses modern happenings such



as Yellowstone wolf recovery (see Way 2017) and marine-food-eating coastal wolves discussed in Ian McAllister's book *The Last Wild Wolves: Ghost of the Great Bear Rainforest* (University of California Press, 2007). Curiously, the title of Wild's book is strangely similar to two other books I own, including *The Return of the Wolf* (NorthWord Press, 1999) by Steve Grooms, which presents the wolf's comeback in Canada and the United States, albeit 25 years ago now, and *The Return of the Wolf: Reflections on the Future of Wolves in the Northeast* (University Press of New England, 2000), edited by John Elder, that discusses the implications and potential of wolves returning to the northeast United States.

Return of the Wolf is a mixture of natural history, native peoples' stories, and conversations with scientists and conservationists. We learn how society's attitudes affect the population dynamics, behaviour, and conservation of wolves on the modern landscape, a setting where more and more people appreciate having nature around even if it challenges us both financially and safety-wise. Wild notes that the fate of wolves remains uncertain and she questions how humans will adapt to wolves. She is optimistic that we will, noting that "I want to hear the wolves but I don't want them to come too close. For their safety, not mine" (p. 241). Accordingly, the first Appendix item is a unique 2.5 page "Wolf Safety Checklist" (p. 243–245), one that you might think is more in tune with living in bear country. However, Wild spends much of the second half of her book discussing 'the myth' that wolves are not dangerous and documents that healthy (i.e., not rabid) wolves are increasingly confronting, and sometimes even killing, humans in North America (Chapter 9). She also describes some first-hand accounts of highly habituated wolves living on Vancouver Island, British Columbia (Chapter 10). In fact, the ecology of those animals

living in human-dominated areas reminds me of the wolf's smaller cousin, Coyote (e.g., Way 2014), in many respects. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that even with increasing boldness of some wolves, the chance of one harming us is still astronomically small compared to potential dangers from our everyday activities.

Given my interest in studying Eastern Coyotes/coywolves (Way 2014), I was fascinated with Wild's discussion of this animal (pp. 91–96) and her decision—due to their unique genetic background—to call them coywolves. While describing the rapid evolution of the coywolf, Wild also discusses the other lesser known wolves, Eastern Wolf (*Canis lycaon*) and Red Wolf (*Canis rufus*), which are possibly the same species living on opposite ends of their native eastern North American range. Wild circles back to Eastern Wolf a few times when also discussing recent aggressive encounters people have had with wolves, some of those with Eastern Wolves in Algonquin Provincial Park.

Overall, this is an easy-to-read, well researched, timely book. While perhaps not having the exciting

flair of a book written by a biologist(s) in their study area, it provides a great up-to-date account of the happenings of wolves worldwide, with a North American focus. Whether you are new to the world of wolves, or a veteran, I recommend adding this book to your library. The nice 16-page colour plate section as well as many black and white photos adds greatly to the read. Hopefully, it will provide food for thought and create compassion for a creature that has been maligned for far too long.

Literature Cited

Way, J.G. 2014. *Suburban Howls: Tracking the Eastern Coyote in Urban Massachusetts*. Revised Edition (edited and e-book). Dog Ear Publishing, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA.

Way, J.G. 2017. [Book Review] *American Wolf: A True Story of Survival and Obsession in the West*. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 131: 375–376. <https://doi.org/10.22621/cfn.v131i4.2091>

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