

The Wolf's Comeback – Beyond the Myths and Headlines

Wolves: Key Allies for Nature

Wolves often stir strong emotions among the public, from admiration to fear. But beyond the myths and headlines, wolves play a vital ecological role and are culturally significant for many communities.

As apex predators, wolves sit at the top of the food chain. They help maintain the balance of entire ecosystems. By preying on herbivores like deer and wild boar, wolves prevent overgrazing. This allows vegetation to recover, stabilizing soil, reducing erosion, and improving water quality. These effects ripple through the entire landscape, benefiting not only wildlife, but also humans, by supporting our agricultural systems (contrary to popular misconception), improving our access to clean water and even reducing flood risks. This is what is called a trophic cascade.

The comeback of the wolf in European ecosystems is thus a great positive for European nature.

Coexistence with Humans

When wolves are discussed, the impact on farmers is the first thing that people point to. This is for good reason as **many farmers experience livestock losses**, especially in regions where traditional protection methods have disappeared. In areas with low wild prey availability, attacks on domestic animals are also more likely. **But did you know, data shows that the overall number of livestock killed by wolves has stabilized, even as wolf populations grow.**

Though the fear of wolves is understandable, **wolves are not a danger to people**. In the last 40 years, **NO fatal wolf attacks on humans were recorded in Europe**. Despite the low number of attacks on people, the attitude towards wolves across Europe still polarizes conversations about their management. The reason is actually quite simple. For many generations we have not grown up with these animals close by.

Often, hunting is presented as a solution to deal with conflicts involving wolves. However, **evidence shows that this approach** is ineffective, as hunting rarely leads to any change in people's attitudes toward wolves. If we want to coexist with wolves, we need a societal transformation that embraces diverse perspectives and carefully considers the real impacts of the measures implemented.

Coexisting with wolves affects many aspects of human life, with both positive and negative impacts. Notably, wolves play a crucial role in regulating ungulate (hoofed mammals) populations. For instance, the **overpopulation of wild boars** has led them to encroach on human settlements and negatively affect farming practices.

However, focusing only on the negative impacts of wolves overlooks the [positive experiences people in Europe have](#) when encountering wolves in the wild. When wolves are allowed to fulfill their ecological function, these problems are reduced and human-nature connections are reinforced.

[Fortunately, there are effective solutions for dealing with conflicts involving wolves.](#) For livestock farmers, measures such as fencing, night enclosures and the use of livestock guarding dogs, such as the Maremmano or the Pyrenean Mountain Dog, have proven successful in protecting herds. Where such systems are implemented, and farmers receive financial support along with proper education, **coexistence becomes not only possible but sustainable.**

Wolves are not intruders; they are returning to landscapes they've inhabited for millennia. Their presence is not a threat, but a sign of a recovering, functioning natural ecosystem. This also gives us the opportunity to educate young people about them, getting them excited about having wolves back. [Many are already spreading this message.](#)

Supporting communities, listening to concerns, and promoting coexistence strategies are essential. With the right tools and support, we can share the landscape and benefit from their presence.