

# Return of the wolf

From *The Washington Post*



Wolves have been re-introduced into the **Yellowstone National Park**. And the park's **ecology** has been vastly improved ...

**N**ine years have elapsed since the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service imported 15 gray wolves from Canada to colonize Yellowstone, wolfless since 1926, when hunters finished exterminating them as unwelcome pests and dangerous predators.

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF AN ENTIRE ECOSYSTEM

Today, the park has 250 to 300 wolves, too many to track them all with radio collars. They are no longer classified as an endangered species, but are now "threatened", and, if a dispute between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the state of Wyoming is resolved, they may soon be "delisted" altogether, allowing carefully controlled hunting.

But, for scientists, this triumph is only the beginning.

Wolves, it turns out, constitute a "keystone" species that is reshaping an entire ecosystem in ways not foreseen when researchers began a crossed-fingers experiment in wildlife preservation.

Today, America's most famous stretch of wilderness has become an ecologist's bonanza. It appears to be evolving in reverse – returning to a time when flora and fauna were in a balance dictated exclusively by forces of nature, not by humans.

(...) Wolves stalk the elk, so elk leave the rivers, where they are vulnerable. The willows, cottonwoods and aspens grow, casting shade that cools the water to temperatures favored by trout. Migratory birds return to roost in the new foliage.

But it does not stop there, said National Park Service wildlife biologist Douglas Smith, leader of the Yellowstone Wolf Project: "In 1996, we had no beaver colonies, and now we have seven, because the beavers

can eat the low-hanging willow branches." And the beavers build dams, creating marshland that "brings back the otters, mink, muskrats and ducks," he said.

Smith, speaking by telephone from his Yellowstone office, said that "it may take 20 or 30 years to measure the full effects" of the wolves' return. And with no ranching, farming or hunting allowed, the park is a perfect laboratory – a fully protected piece of wild country bigger, at 2.2 million acres, than the state of Delaware.

## "NO CAUSE FOR ALARM"

(...) Elk, not surprisingly, have suffered, both from weather and wolves, their numbers in the park shrinking to about 8,000 today. This, however, should not be cause for alarm, Smith said, but instead regarded as another aspect of the park's environmental transformation. "Ravens", magpies, golden eagles, bears, bald eagles and coyotes feed off every elk kill," Smith said, "and I'm not even mentioning smaller mammals or insects."

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Les mots difficiles sont marqués d'un "V" dans le texte. L'accent tonique est indiqué en rouge.

▶ <b>allowing</b> tolérant	▶ <b>mammal</b>
▶ <b>aspen</b> tremble	mammifère
▶ <b>bald eagle</b> aigle d'Amérique	▶ <b>marshland</b> marécage
▶ <b>ban</b> interdiction	▶ <b>mink</b> vison
▶ <b>beaver</b> castor	▶ <b>otter</b> loutre
▶ <b>bonanza</b> pactole	▶ <b>pest</b> vermine
▶ <b>butt</b> (jeu de mots) butt = mégot; no butts about it = pas de mais	▶ <b>ranching</b> élevage en ranch
▶ <b>cast shade</b> projeter l'ombre	▶ <b>raven</b> corbeau
▶ <b>collar</b> collier	▶ <b>reshape</b> remodeler
▶ <b>crossed-fingers</b> ici, audacieux	▶ <b>roost</b> se nicher
▶ <b>dam</b> barrage	▶ <b>shrink</b> se réduire
▶ <b>elapse</b> s'écouler	▶ <b>species</b> espèce
▶ <b>elk</b> élan	▶ <b>stalk</b> chasser
▶ <b>foliage</b> feuillage	▶ <b>stretch</b> étendue
▶ <b>foreseen</b> prévu	▶ <b>survey</b> étude
▶ <b>golden eagle</b> aigle royal	▶ <b>track</b> ici, suivre à la trace
▶ <b>hunter</b> chasseur	▶ <b>trout</b> truite
▶ <b>keystone</b> clé	▶ <b>turns out</b> (if ...) s'avère-t-il
▶ <b>kill</b> ici, cadavre	▶ <b>wildlife</b> faune et flore
▶ <b>low-hanging</b> bas	▶ <b>willow</b> saule
▶ <b>magpie</b> pie	▶ <b>wolf</b> loup