

## Wolf

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The wolf can be seen in about 85 percent of Alaska's 586,000 square-mile area with densities as high as about one wolf per 25 square miles in favorable habitats.

**General Description:** The pelt color of wolves living in Alaska ranges from black to nearly white. Most adult male wolves in Alaska weigh from 85 to 115 pounds. Females average 5 to 10 pounds less than males. Wolves reach adult size by about 1 year of age.

**Social Habits:** Wolves are highly social animals and usually live in packs that include parents and pups of the year. Larger packs may have two or three litters of pups from more than one female. Some yearlings may stay with the pack. The social order in the pack is characterized by a dominance hierarchy with a separate rank order among females and males. Fighting is uncommon within packs. The average size pack is 6 or 7 animals. In most areas wolf packs tend to remain within a territory used almost exclusively by pack members. In Alaska the territory of a pack often includes from 300 to 1,000 square miles of habitat.

**Life History:** Wolf litters usually are born in May or early June. Pups are usually born in a den excavated as much as 10 feet into the soil, and most adult wolves center their activities around dens while traveling as far as 20 miles away in search of food, which is regularly brought back to the den. Wolf pups are weaned gradually during midsummer. In mid or late summer, pups are usually moved some distance away from the den and by early winter are capable of traveling and hunting with adult pack members. Wolves are great travelers, and packs often travel 10 to 30 or more miles in a day during winter. Dispersing wolves have been known to move from 100 to 700 miles from their original range.

In spite of a generally high birth rate, wolves rarely become abundant because mortality is high. In much of Alaska hunting and trapping are the major sources of mortality, although diseases, malnutrition, accidents and particularly intra-specific strife act to regulate wolf numbers.

**Food Habits:** Wolves are carnivores and in most of mainland Alaska moose and/or caribou is their primary food, with dall sheep being important in limited areas.

Wolves can still be seen in most parts of Alaska by those willing to spend time in remote areas.

