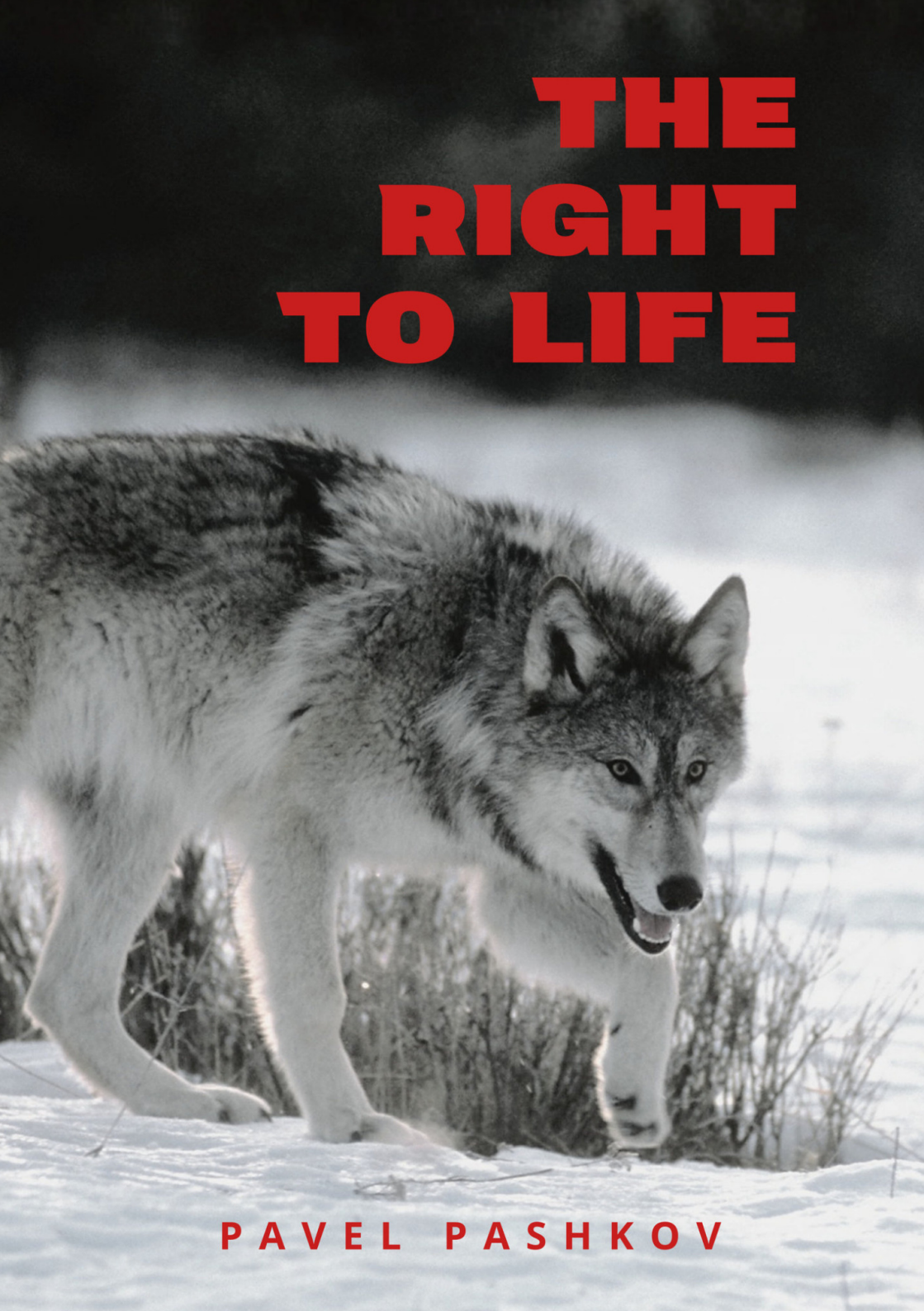
THE RIGHT TO LIFE



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ThePashkov

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WE ARE WOLVES

Introduction

In the midst of social events and public life, people are more interested in economics and politics than in the wild nature that seems "somewhere far away." Yet, we humans are inevitably part of Earth's biosphere and depend on it! We rely on the health of the nature surrounding us.

Right now, wolves are being exterminated worldwide. In some countries, wolves are gone, and where packs still exist, they are hunted! Authorities pay huge bounties for each wolf killed, officials siphon millions from budgets to combat the imaginary gray "enemy," and the media fuels hysteria about the "harmfulness and uselessness" of wolves in ecosystems.

Meanwhile, the last guardians of the wild are forced to hide, survive, and adapt to the increasing pressure from humans.

The main problem is that our society is unaware of the importance of wolves in ecosystems! People have no idea what will happen to nature if all wolves are

destroyed. All available information is reduced to a negative image of the wolf, actively supported by the authorities.

But what if this isn't true? What if you've been blatantly lied to for decades, justifying a real destructive ecocide against living nature?

What if the wolf is actually our friend, not our enemy?

My name is Pavel Pashkov—I have been researching ecological issues and protecting wildlife in Russia for many years. In recent years, my colleagues and I have tried to defend wolves, launched petitions, and urged the government to begin legislative work to protect wolves.

Unfortunately, we encountered misunderstanding from society, significant gaps in knowledge, and active resistance to our work from the authorities and the vast hunting community. With immense pressure and a lack of knowledge within society, achieving change was impossible.

I decided to write a book in defense of wolves and tell people the truth about what's happening! This book is a collection of personal notes and observations based on years of studying the problem of wolf extermination worldwide. To write this book, I studied dozens of

scientific works by global and Russian scientists, and I spoke with hunters and researchers across various parts of Russia. It's a very complex task!

The book "The Right to Life" aims to help people understand the wolf issue, learn about the extermination of the wild's guardians, and see where this leads!

Chapter 1. Who has seen a wolf?

Who has seen a wolf?

Or how about this: who has seen a live wolf in its natural habitat?

According to Rosstat, at the beginning of 2023, there were over 71,000 scientific researchers in Russia. Among them, only a portion are biologists. And as for wolf specialists, you can count them on your fingers—most likely on the fingers of one hand!

In 2017, the number of people hunting in just the Moscow region was about 500,000. This statistic was reported by the media, citing the regional Minister of Agriculture and Food, Andrey Razin.

As you can see, the imbalance is enormous:

— only a handful of wolf biology specialists;

— hundreds of thousands of people killing wild animals, thus supporting hunting even if they aren't wolf hunters themselves, in just one region;

— and millions of people simply aren't interested in the issue and know nothing about it.

I want to talk about the wild wolf.

About the real predator and its place in the integrated natural ecosystem of the Russian Taiga.

I want to somewhat address the imbalance where a real predator, essential to the natural ecosystem just like any other element of a complete system, is being destroyed mindlessly, en masse, and for contrived reasons that have no basis in reality.

The question of "who has seen a real wild wolf in its natural habitat?" can easily be expanded to "who has maintained direct and immediate contact with the natural habitat at all?"

Alas, we are all separated from the "real wild nature" now!

But if our ideas about the forest in general, or about birds or bunnies, somewhat align with reality, then our ideas about predators in general, and the Russian wolf in particular, are completely opposite to reality! Or parallel to reality?! I’m not even sure how to express it precisely, but our human perceptions of predators are so distorted that they don't resemble real predators at all!

And this is something we simply must understand!

Essentially, the issue is to dissect (at least theoretically, at least in book format!) our cognitive distortions, our errors in thinking when it comes to predators.

Specifically — using the example of the Russian wolf.

What do we know about the wolf?

How do our perceptions of the wolf align with reality?

Or are they more like mythological tales of "terrifying predators," some kind of "ancestral or genetic memory"?

Whether this needs to be understood and whether it’s important is up to the reader.

I have concluded that the attitude towards predators in the natural ecological system is of particular importance. If you will, it serves as a kind of "litmus test" for understanding the essence of an ecosystem in principle.

Why?

It's incredibly simple!

The attitude towards predators (towards wolves in our current discussion) is just overloaded with emotional components!

For a hunter, a wolf is a prized trophy.

"Hey, I'm a super macho man, I took down a wolf (lion, panther, or insert any other fierce beast), and it didn’t take me down!"

How about that?!

And this is a lie to others and to oneself that's just beyond belief!

Yes, it had some relation to the real state of affairs—once upon a time. From a helicopter, on a snowmobile, through a thermal imager, through optics from a kilometer away—it's already an ugly parody of masculinity. A senseless killing that, in the end, is simply shameful and dishonorable to call either “sport” or even “hunting” at all!

For some “average person,” the wolf is a symbol of something terrifying.

“Oh, wolves! Oh, so dangerous and scary! Oh, they attacked! Oh, they devoured!”

Again—NOTIONS FROM THE PAST! An illusion formed by thousands of literary plots from books. Hundreds of scenes from movies. And having, to put it mildly, a very distant relation to reality!

And even the so-called “scientific” view of wolves is precisely a “pseudo-scientific illusion,” not reality!

We have the bare minimum, but even in middle school now, the basics of ecological knowledge are taught. Biology books illustrate food chains and ecological pyramids.

To make it clear to everyone why I say that pseudo-scientific nonsense is forming in students' heads instead of a truly scientific understanding, I'll briefly repeat the terms:

A food (trophic) chain is a series of connections between groups of organisms (plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms) through which matter and energy are transferred by one organism eating another.

An ecological pyramid is a graphical representation of the relationship between producers and consumers at all levels (herbivores, predators, species that feed on other predators) in an ecosystem.

Producers (from Latin producens — “creating”) are organisms capable of producing organic substances from inorganic ones, meaning all autotrophs.

These are mainly green plants.

Producers are the first (lowest) link in the food chain.

Consumers (from Latin consume — to consume) are heterotrophs, organisms that consume ready-made organic substances created by autotrophs (producers).

Animals are considered consumers.

Apex predators (or top predators, super predators) is a general term for a group of organisms occupying the top position in the food chain. Their numbers are not regulated by other predators. The principle is simple: they eat everyone, and no one can eat them.

In the Arctic, the apex predator is the polar bear. In other regions, it could be crocodiles, big cats, brown bears, or grizzlies. And in some areas—large packs of wolves.

Apex predators are usually placed at the fourth or fifth level of the food chain. That is, at the highest level of the ecological pyramid.

An apex predator can steal others' prey and eliminate competitors. It can also provide food for symbiotic species. Sharks provide food for remoras and pilot fish, humans feed cats, dogs, etc.

And yes: humans are also apex predators!

What makes representations of ecological systems flawed, in my opinion, is precisely the depiction of images as hierarchical pyramids.

For some reason, I always see these representations that the lower the level on the “ecological pyramid,” the more important it is. Like, “everything depends on it.” And the top level of the super predator (wolf packs in our narrative) is supposedly “not needed at all, we can do without it.”

I've really encountered statements like this: “The top predator just eats everyone, any ecosystem can do without it!”

And that's a huge mistake!

A gross error initially created by linear logic with visualizations of various kinds of “pyramids” or linear “chains”!

The point is, these are actually CYCLES.

THERE ARE NO AND CANNOT BE “UNNECESSARY” ELEMENTS!

The removal of apex predators from an ecosystem, or conversely, their excessive proliferation, leads to a cumulative effect known as a trophic cascade. This results in significant changes not only in the numbers

and lifestyles of mid-level predators but also in herbivores and the plant life of the system.

In other words, a pack of wolves is like a keystone, holding the ecological system together as a whole. And the Russian wolf is a keystone species for the boreal northern taiga.

You could say that it's thanks to the Russian wolf that we see the Russian Taiga as it is!

The destruction of the last free-ranging packs of Russian wolves will immediately lead to a trophic cascade of changes in the Russian Taiga. With high probability, these changes will be catastrophic, destroying northern biocenoses.

Chapter 2. Keystone

A keystone (sometimes just called a lock) is a wedge-shaped stone at the apex of a vault or arch. When constructing an arch or the ribs of a vault, it is inserted last and “locks” the other wedge-shaped stones, balancing the lateral thrust of the curved structure, which gives the entire construction its strength. Hence the name. The wooden “centering” (a special device that replicates the curvature of the arch or vault), on which the vault rests during construction, is dismantled afterward.

Accordingly, if you knock out such a stone from the very top of an arch or vault—everything collapses! This stone holds the vault together as one whole!

I didn’t randomly call wolf packs a kind of keystone that holds the ecological system of the boreal northern taiga together. The analogy is direct! The Russian wolf, being at the top of a rather conditional ecological pyramid, connects parts of the ecosystem with each other.

For a detective novel, it’s important to maintain intrigue until the very end. It’s crucial that the reader doesn’t guess who the real culprit is. But in my narrative, I’ll do the opposite. I’ll first talk about what’s important. About the essence. And I’ll try to explain it clearly and briefly. Then I’ll tell the gripping detective story about “how it is” and “why it’s so” in detail and specifics.

Our knowledge is expanding.

This also applies to our understanding of complex natural systems.

Sometimes people intuitively guessed how everything was arranged literally in ancient times. And now new scientific research only confirms this and adds details. However, sometimes conclusions from new observations or statistical generalizations are unexpected.

Modern ideas about the key role of apex predators in ecosystems are recent. And quite unexpected. I’ve written about this for my readers many times. And I’ve received many responses where readers say: How is this possible?! It can’t be that a “useless consumer”—a top-level super-predator—is a key element of the ecosystem! …?!!

I’ll structure my story a bit differently, and FIRST I’ll briefly answer these questions.

So: how does it happen that a super-predator shapes the character of the biome in which it lives?

I'll illustrate this with the example of a wolf pack.

First.

Wolves eat a certain number of other animals. But, as has long been known in practice, it's usually the old, sick, and weakened animals that fall to the wolves' teeth.

The expression "wolf, the forest's janitor" didn't appear yesterday!

Second.

Wolves are a source of disturbance for all animals that could potentially become their prey. As a result, deer or sheep move more frequently from place to place. They graze more evenly on tree branches or grass, trampling less on the spot where they feed.

Without a wolf pack, they would stay in one place. Until the total destruction of tasty young shoots of young trees. Until the complete trampling of a meadow with delicious young grass.

You could say that not only the apex predator—humans—herd sheep! In the wild, wolves act as shepherds, ensuring that sheep don't overgraze and

trample pastures!

Third.

Apex predators typically eliminate lower-level predators in their territory.

A wolf pack doesn’t tolerate packs of jackals in its territory, for example.

And as it turned out through precise quantitative accounting, in areas where wolf packs roam, there are an order of magnitude fewer coyotes or jackals. However, there are several orders of magnitude more hares or waterfowl! There’s no secret, it’s simple: the wolf eliminates competing small predators. As a result, preserving and protecting species that suffered from jackals.

Fourth.

Again about the “wolf, the forest’s janitor,” but this simply needs to be a separate point.

By destroying sick animals, the wolf prevents the development of epidemics of infectious diseases. It prevents contagious diseases from becoming widespread.

Strangely enough, even accusations of wolves spreading rabies are most likely a deliberate lie to maintain the possibility of unrestricted wolf hunting.

Real statistical data show that the sources of rabies are most often badgers or foxes, but not wolves. On the contrary, a wolf pack significantly reduces the number of lower-level competing predators, thereby also combating the spread of rabies!

Fifth.

The wolf eliminates invasive species, preserving the integrity of natural biocenoses.

An invasive species is a biological species whose spread threatens biological diversity. The typical initial cause of the spread of invasive species is the intentional or unintentional introduction of organisms beyond their natural habitats by humans. Such a foreign species disrupts established connections within the biocenosis, which is very dangerous for the existing biological system, potentially leading to its complete destruction.

It's not commonly discussed, but feral cats or dogs can become invasive species that destroy natural biocenoses. I've faced criticism just for MENTIONING THIS ISSUE, even from people who support my work: "How dare you blame cats or dogs for anything, they're

so cute!"

Believe me, for birds or small animals, cats and dogs are simply death. We can't approach the evaluation of natural ecosystems so childishly!

I think I've sufficiently illustrated the mechanisms by which the wolf serves as a factor in maintaining the integrity and stability of natural biocenoses.

The question lies in our, humans', understanding of these complex connections in living nature.

And the question is what we, as humans, want. How important is the preservation of stable natural ecosystems to us?

Chapter 3. Why do we need wolves?

This is a question that needs to be considered right away: Why do we need wolves at all? Because this question is foundational. Fundamental.

I want the reader to understand from the very beginning: when I talk about the necessity of preserving the Russian Wolf, I am talking about the necessity of preserving the Russian Taiga. I've been saying the same thing for many years: it is vital for us to preserve natural ecological systems.

Therefore, the answer to why we need wolves begins with understanding why we need to preserve the Ancient Forests.

Not so long ago, in historical terms, there was a different regime in our country, the 'Soviet' one, with the USSR. That's when the industrial development of the boreal forests in the Northern Hemisphere began in our country. I have a literary work. And I will show how the foundation for the industrial development of the Russian

Taiga was laid with a short quote from a song:

«…

Under the wing of the plane, something sings

The green sea of the taiga.

For centuries, winds and snow swept there,

Geologists passed through there not long ago.

We will live in a settlement

For now, not wealthy

To take all the riches from underground.”

A wonderful song. Inspiring! Many now nostalgically remember the Soviet state. A time of developing vast spaces, previously untouched by humans. The construction of the Baikal-Amur Mainline across the vast country. The development of virgin lands, where endless steppe ecosystems were plowed into fields. And the development of the 'green sea of the taiga,' for industrial enterprises, roads, settlements. And sometimes just for logging. The developing USSR needed a lot of timber. Even more timber was needed for export.

Now we live in the same country's spaces. Only now we have a different state: 'anti-Soviet.' And the foundation laid by the USSR for the industrial destruction of the

Russian Taiga has been successfully built upon by a highly efficient capitalist machine that turns the real values of the living world around us into the illusory values of wealth and money. The Ancient Forests are being processed at an ever-accelerating pace into numbers on the bank accounts of oligarchs.

In reality, regardless of 'socialisms,' 'capitalisms,' and other '-isms,' we see a very simple thing: people managing large social organisms are completely detached from reality. States, transnational corporations, supra-national structures like the UN bureaucracy — everywhere it's the same! The official manages numbers. Somewhere these are numbers on a bank account. Somewhere these are numbers in a reforestation report.

A million hectares were cut down — enough for the numbers to match. And for the reforestation report to also say 'a million hectares.' But the fact that in reality, an Ancient Forest is not equal to a so-called 'restored forest' planted in place of a destroyed Ancient Forest — that doesn't matter to anyone! More than that! From my extensive practical experience, I see that officials, starting from the lowest level, genuinely do not understand what the problem is!

Are there ways to solve such a systemic problem? Of course, there are! And the solutions are simple and clear! We need to maintain a real, living connection with the living world around us. And turn to scientific knowledge to assess qualitative indicators, not replace them with invented quantitative indicators in bureaucratic reports.

And the objective scientific data today is as follows:

1. There is no longer an endless 'green sea of the taiga.' By the most optimistic estimates, no more than 20% of relatively untouched Ancient Forests remain.

2. The regulation of climate on a global scale by Ancient Forests is reliably confirmed. In both the boreal taiga and tropical forests, scientific observations have repeatedly confirmed the theory of the biotic pump of atmospheric moisture. The principle is simple: no trees — no moisture transfer from the oceans inland.

And here we come to the question of the Russian Wolf specifically, and the question of apex predators in general.

Despite the idea of the global biocenosis of the entire planet Earth (the Biosphere of the planet) originating in the 19th century, it is only now, at the beginning of the 21st century, that it is being clearly confirmed.

Numerous sensors on satellites, accumulated scientific observation data over a century, along with computer technology that allows processing vast amounts of data, have enabled assessments on a global (planetary) scale.

And it became clear: yes, the Earth's Biosphere is a fact. Yes, everything on our planet is connected to everything else: cutting down the taiga in Siberia provokes climate changes on the other side of the planet. And, similarly, deforestation of the Amazon rainforest in South America leads to changes in average temperatures in Tibet in the center of the Eurasian continent.

So what does the wolf have to do with it?

It turns out that the apex predator in a large ecological system connects everything to everything. A pack of wolves migrates across the Russian Taiga for thousands of kilometers. Wolves need a lot of food, which is insufficient in one place. And it is precisely the apex predator, being the top element in the food pyramid, that serves as the most reliable indicator of the QUALITATIVE state of a vast biogeocenosis.

BY TRACKING THE STATE OF WOLF PACKS, WE CAN RELIABLY ASSESS THE STATE OF THE ENTIRE TAIGA AS A WHOLE.

The flip side of the wolf's position at the top of the ecological pyramid is that by influencing these apex predators, we can affect the integrity and connectivity of a vast biogeocenosis. In a way, you could even say that the threads from all elements of its habitat—the green sea of the taiga—converge in the paws of the Russian Wolf. By assessing and managing the wolf population, we can not only obtain objective data about the state of our Russian Taiga but also influence all elements of this incredibly complex living system.

Chapter 4. Hatred of wolves is fear of freedom

In general, hatred of wolves is hatred of freedom.

And hatred of freedom is, first and foremost, fear.

The fear of freedom is akin to a certain form of fear of open spaces, a fear of the expanse before you. This is probably why such a phobia is often called “agoraphobia.” Although, of course, this is not an exact term. Apparently, there is no specific word that precisely means “fear of freedom.”

Properly speaking, “agoraphobia” (from the ancient Greek ἀγορά “marketplace” + φόβος “fear”) is a mental disorder characterized by a fear of crowds.

But the second meaning of the term “agoraphobia” is the fear of open spaces, open doors; the fear experienced when crossing a large square or deserted street without a guide.

So, it’s not exactly “fear of freedom.”

The image of the wolf or a wolf pack is a contradictory and extremely powerful symbol in culture. Our ancestors, our fathers, revered wolves. They have always been a symbol of strength and freedom. Often, the artistic image of a wolf pack was a symbol of resistance to unjust authority. There are plenty of mythological stories where by destroying Wolves, authorities destroy Freedom. The image of the “Wolf Brotherhood” is such a universal archetypal image of a male community in many cultures. Various orders or knightly structures called themselves this. Cossacks or various groups of mercenary reiters. Different kinds of Robin Hoods, “free shooters,” rebels, or just bandits.

When talking about wolves, one cannot ignore the symbolic meaning of the Wolf image. And the symbolic destruction of the Wolf precisely as an image or symbol of Freedom.

I understand that I am speaking of elusive things. Of the internal psychological states of people. Which collectively form the general psychological states of societies. But I think many such moments are underestimated. Often, the destruction of natural ecological systems occurred in the name of something. In the name of some idea. That is, such destruction was not of a practical nature!

As far as I understand, the ideas of “man’s dominion over nature” appeared relatively recently. Since the beginning of the 20th century. I don’t see such ideas before the previous 19th century. But from the start of industrialization—there you go, everything in the world is imbued with only “man’s dominion over nature”! Every time, literally every such project meant to demonstrate “man’s dominion over nature” shows the exact opposite—the stupidity of man and the destruction of man’s own habitat. I will give two of the brightest examples. Without details, as this is not quite the topic of this book.

First, the Chinese state’s fight against sparrows. The result of which was the extermination of sparrows, provoking the death of millions of people from hunger—there was no one to protect the fields from insect pests.

And second—the program of developing virgin and fallow lands in the USSR. The result of which was the destruction of the steppe biocenoses of the central Eurasian continent on a simply fantastic scale. Along with the destruction of an entire sea—the Aral Sea. Oops, and thanks to the “greatness” of man, as well as states, parties, and governments, huge millennia-old Living Systems of the planet simply ceased to exist…

Something like that... Such is the “greatness of man” and such is “man’s dominion over nature”...

Speaking of such elusive ideological and psychological things, I am talking about a very important problem. “War with nature,” “conquest of nature”—this is such a mental illness of large bureaucratic systems. When the power of states or commercial corporations becomes so detached from the reality of the Living World, on which it only lives, that it begins to dream of destroying the surrounding world for its own omnipotence. Such “social schizophrenia” results!

Fear of the wolf is largely not about real wolves, but about the image of dangerous predators from movies or books. I’m not saying that predators don’t pose a danger! I’m saying that the danger is exaggerated hundreds of times. And the wolf is assessed not as a biological species in the real space of the biological system, but as a dangerous image in the illusory world of human myths.

“The Big Bad Wolf ate Grandma. But the Good Hunters came, killed the Wolf, cut open his belly, and saved Grandma.”

I have encountered descriptions of mythological plots of fairy tales in psychology books. Archetypal images on which people act. For a long time, I didn't understand how this looks in reality. Until one day, an ideological, so to speak, amateur hunter told me: "Well, I'm a wolf hunter. It's my thing—to kill wolves. I don't get the same thrill from any other beast, only when I go after a wolf!" Honestly, I didn't immediately understand what he was talking about. Then it became clear. He's a retired "enforcer." With very high ranks and titles. And a convinced "wolf hunter" for many years.

Indeed, dangerous criminals are called "seasoned wolves." The image of the wolf, so to speak, is inherently criminalized.

Indeed, law enforcement or police officers are called "dogs," "hounds," or "wolf hunters." And they call themselves "wolf hunters" with pleasure and pride.

Indeed, I remember from school history lessons that the oprichniki of Tsar Ivan the Terrible hung dog heads on their saddles as a symbol of their status as "Tsar's Dogs."

Indeed, I've come across somewhere that inquisitors in medieval Europe proudly called themselves "God's Dogs."

I initially found it strange that such fabricated, illusory images and ideas could turn someone into a convinced wolf hunter. But apparently, it's not uncommon! At least among ideological hunters, the overwhelming majority are either government officials or various representatives of law enforcement agencies.

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato is credited with the expression: “Ideas (eidolons) rule the world.”

There's something to that!

It's just unfortunate that the world is ruled by completely schizophrenic ideas about “man's dominion over nature,” of which man is a part. This makes the “conquest of nature” even more aggressive and absurdly delusional.

And the mythological “criminalization of the wolf” as the “gray bandit” is the same kind of schizophrenic nonsense!

Chapter 5. The Colorado wolf

Now let's delve a bit into the situation with wolves around the world. The fact is, in our fight for wolves in Russia, we draw on the tragic experiences of wolf situations in other countries. We use this experience to demonstrate the consequences of eradicating wolves!

The authorities diligently ignore this truth, pretending nothing exists. Even the scientific research of global scholars. When it suits them, they refer to “foreign experience,” but when the questions become “less convenient” to acknowledge that same “foreign experience,” the authorities claim it doesn’t concern them... because it’s somewhere else, and we’re going our own way!

These are purely “technical-political” issues, and you could write a separate book about them. But let's turn to foreign experience to better understand the problem of exterminating the wild’s natural custodians: wolves.

We know that THERE ARE NO BORDERS TO ECOLOGICAL DISASTERS. One Earth, one Biosphere! And the wolves' pain is shared by all of us.

USA, Colorado. A region where the last wolf was exterminated by humans 80 years ago. Now, 80 years without wolf packs, the authorities, under pressure from scientists, have begun a project to reintroduce wolves into the wild. The reintroduction of wolves in Colorado will cover a vast area, about 22 million acres of public land. In the next three to five years, they plan to introduce not too many wolves—probably 30 to 50 individuals. But the point is to restore the population of the wild gray wolf. To restore full-fledged packs.

The wolf reintroduction project in Colorado is being implemented, taking into account the experience of restoring the wolf population in Yellowstone National Park, where wolves were reintroduced in the 1990s. The experience was extremely interesting. The positive effect of restoring the population of top predators is well demonstrated in the research of many specialists. And now in Colorado, the restoration of wolf packs is planned for an area much larger than in Yellowstone Park.

The story that led to the beginning of wolf restoration in Colorado is a long one.

I'll start with Colorado Proposition 114. This is a legislative initiative by the state's citizens for the reintroduction of gray wolves. This proposal by ordinary people, residents of the state, was placed on the ballot in Colorado as an initiated state statute on November 3, 2020. And this proposal was approved and became state law after the 2020 vote.

The story is dramatic. The state law on wolf population restoration is still causing controversy now, even as wolves are being brought in and released into the wild.

I will present the election results for Colorado Proposition 114.

Approve/ YES — 1,590,299 votes; 50.91%;

Disapprove/ NO — 1,533,313 votes; 49.09%.

As you can see, although the results are officially confirmed and the proposal to restore the wolf population became law, during the vote, residents' opinions were almost evenly split! The law was passed with a minimal margin!

Nevertheless, the consequence of passing the law in 2020 was that the restoration of the wild wolf population was prepared and began to be implemented.

On December 18, 2023, five wolves were released in an undisclosed location in Grand County after being captured and brought from Oregon. Two young males, two young females, and one adult male wolf were set free. The pack's movements are tracked using radio-collar tracking. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (the organization managing the wolf population restoration) plans to repeat this process until 10–15 wolves are released by mid-March 2024.

That is:

— they release viable packs capable of sustaining themselves by hunting in the wild;

— they specifically capture and relocate wild wolves that have previously lived in free conditions;

— the success of the relocation is monitored using modern observation tools—radio collars tracked by satellites.

Here, a small digression is needed: in our country and in the USA, there are significant differences in legislative activity. In the USA, a law can be proposed by citizens as a legislative initiative. And it can be promoted by

various groups of citizens or public organizations.

Let's look at who was behind the campaigns related to Proposition 114 for the reintroduction of wolves in Colorado.

The campaign supporting this initiative raised $2.4 million in donations.

Opponents of the initiative raised $1.06 million.

The Rocky Mountain Wolf Action Fund (RMWAF) and the nonprofit Rocky Mountain Wolf Project led the campaign supporting this initiative. The campaign raised $2.4 million in private donations.

The RMWAF claimed that the reintroduction of wolves would restore the natural balance of ecosystems. Activists from the fund actively promoted this idea among local residents. Here are quotes from the Fund’s president, Rob Edward:

“Gray wolves are the ecological engines of the Northern Hemisphere.”

> “Since the 1940s, when the last wolf was killed in Colorado, our ecosystem has suffered, thrown out of balance. Without wolves to keep them on their toes and moving nearby, elk and deer destroy vital riparian vegetation, leading to erosion and habitat

> disruption, threatening beavers, songbirds, and even native trout.”

Coloradans opposing the restoration of the wolf population have created their own fund, "Stop the Wolf." Altogether, their anti-campaign raised $1.06 million. The main opponents of wolves were members of the Colorado Farm Bureau.

Here are quotes from the vice president of the Colorado Farm Bureau, Shawn Martini:

> "We remain skeptical that you can introduce wolves into Colorado without creating significant problems. We are concerned not only about our way of life here in the state, which is based on outdoor recreation, but also about livestock in the western part of the state and the ecosystem. Colorado is home to several endangered species that could potentially be preyed upon by large predators like the Canadian gray wolf. Therefore, we are skeptical that such decisions should be made by voters through a ballot initiative."

This relentless battle between environmentalists and scientists on one side and farmers on the other has been unfolding in Colorado for many years. The environmentalists won, gaining a slight edge in public

support.

A brief overview of the history and current status of the gray wolf in the United States.

Gray wolves were present throughout the United States, including Colorado, before Europeans arrived in North America.

By the 1930s, gray wolves had been eradicated from most of the western United States, primarily due to predator control programs and habitat degradation. The last gray wolves in Colorado were killed around 1940.

The gray wolf was classified as an endangered species at the federal level in 1978.

Gray wolves were reintroduced in Idaho and Montana in 1995, and in Yellowstone National Park in 1996.

In 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed the gray wolf from the endangered species list under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the Northern Rockies.

In March 2019, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed removing the gray wolf from the endangered species list under the Endangered Species Act across the continental United States. The Fish and Wildlife Service stated that wolves "are no longer in danger of extinction or likely to become so in the foreseeable

future." The Rocky Mountain Wolf Action Fund responded by stating that delisting wolves would result in the loss of progress made in their recovery and is a premature decision.

And finally, since 2020, thanks to public support, a law has been in effect in Colorado under which a wolf reintroduction program is being implemented.

In northwest Colorado, immediately after the reintroduction law was approved for the ballot, reports emerged that a pack of gray wolves had been spotted in the state. Opponents of wolves in Colorado began spreading the information, exclaiming things like: "No to the return of wolves to the wild, and look over there—they've been seen! Nature has had enough!"

Scientists working with the Rocky Mountain Wolf Project immediately opposed any attempts to hinder the reintroduction of wolves in Colorado. They stated that even if wolves, even a whole pack, were indeed spotted in the state, it is not enough for the local ecosystems. Recovery of biogeocenoses is possible ONLY IF WOLVES ARE REINTRODUCED to the western half of the state and legally recognized as an ecologically important keystone species, providing them with real protection.

Note, scientists repeatedly emphasize: wolves MUST be returned to the wild to restore ecosystems and PROVIDED WITH LEGAL PROTECTION as a crucial keystone species.

Quoting Michael Robinson from the Center for Biological Diversity:

> "We are pleased that there might be a family of wolves in Moffat County, but these animals remain vulnerable to legal killing in neighboring Wyoming and Utah… Nothing but the adoption of Initiative 107 guarantees that Colorado will have a wolf population to maintain the natural balance for our children and grandchildren."

A direct quote from a real scientist who, along with his colleagues, is fighting for the return of wolves to the wild.

I studied the overall situation with wolves in Colorado and neighboring states. In 2020, it was illegal to kill wolves in Colorado as they were listed as "endangered." However, the penalties for killing or harming them are laughably small! Over the past 20 years, not a single individual wolf (lone or in a small broken pack) has survived in the state.

People simply killed them without fear of severe punishment! Even if caught killing, one could get away with a small fine, and that would be the end of it.

Diana Tomback, a professor of conservation biology at the University of Colorado Denver, says:

> "We know that individual wolves occasionally make the dangerous journey from Yellowstone through southern Wyoming... Reports of lone wolves roaming Yellowstone, Montana, and Idaho have circulated for years. Recovery became possible only after we intentionally reintroduced wolves to Yellowstone. Colorado is in the same boat."

As you can see, real-life experience was previously gained by specialists during the reintroduction of wolves in Yellowstone.

Wolves migrate over vast distances. Those tiny packs that scientists restored in Yellowstone have certainly visited the states of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California.

But over 25 years, only a few lone wolves have been spotted in Northern Colorado. All other wolves heading to Colorado were killed en route in neighboring Wyoming, where authorities classify wolves as

"predatory animals" outside Yellowstone, south of the Colorado border. Wolves can be legally killed at any time, in any number, without licenses or any destructive paperwork.

See one? Kill it.

And you know what's most disgusting about this story? Wyoming calls itself the "Equality State," and their official motto is "Equal Rights."

Apparently, this doesn't apply to the last unfortunate wild wolves struggling to survive in the age of humans, trying to maintain their populations.

The return of wolves in Colorado will continue despite the extensive efforts of opponents who are still trying to block reintroduction. In the winter of 2025, Native American tribes in eastern Washington agreed to send up to 15 wild wolves to Colorado under a new agreement.

What is this agreement? We're talking about the last Native Americans, who, like wolves, were once nearly exterminated in North America, and they have their own lands.

Colorado authorities made an agreement with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, allowing them to capture wolves on tribal lands from

December to March 2025.

Additionally, authorities tried to negotiate with other states to allow them to relocate some wolves to Colorado. Oregon agreed, but Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming stated they would not supply wolves to Colorado.

They say there's disagreement in society; people demand the wolves be killed, not given life. Therefore, authorities won't protect the wolves, let alone reintroduce them in Colorado!

I want to specifically point out that Wyoming is on this list, through which wolves often migrate toward Colorado. Along the way, they're simply wiped out. Instead of capturing the wolves and transferring them to a neighboring state, Wyoming authorities kill them.

Colorado is one of the few states that has started a major fight for wolves! Over the next three to five years, authorities plan to release 10 to 15 wolves annually to gradually create a self-sustaining population. The wolves will breed on their own and will receive new companions in the coming years!

And state law will guarantee protection for the wolves.

I also want to comment on Jared-Michael Erickson, the tribal chairman, who commented on the cooperation with Colorado authorities.

> "The people of Colville firmly believe in preserving our environment, including its fish and wildlife. We are very pleased that our restoration efforts on our own lands have progressed far enough that we can share some of these magnificent creatures with the people of Colorado... The Colville Tribes are very excited to work with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to restore the wolf population in Colorado."

The truth is, people are rapidly exterminating all predators worldwide. Whether it's wolves or bears, tigers or lions in Africa, the extermination is ongoing and at horrifying scales.

The situation with wolves is exacerbated by the fact that there are hardly any left. Colorado is now taking a huge first step toward protecting wolves, which is truly an unprecedented case where authorities have listened to scientists and the public.

What will happen now, and how will the return of wolves to Colorado affect local ecosystems? First, it's important to understand that top predators are being reintroduced, without whom their prey species become

numerous. This will inevitably lead to balance in local biogeocenoses! It's very simple: when wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park in the 1990s, there was a recorded recovery of plant species like willow and aspen. These, in turn, provided nesting sites for many bird species and conditions for beavers to build dams, affecting the hydrology of rivers and streams.

Any ecological problems must be assessed ONLY COMPREHENSIVELY. If, say, a person is ill, a doctor must understand the further consequences of the illness even after recovery. The same goes for wildlife and ecosystems: problems and their impact on biogeocenoses need to be evaluated comprehensively.

And the return of wolves to the wild yields gradual results, impacting the chronic ailments of ecosystems. That's why wolves are the CUSTODIANS of the wild, maintaining the health of wild animal and plant populations.

Observing how nature transformed in Yellowstone, scientists were able to create an approximate picture of what results might be seen in Colorado. It's important to understand that in Yellowstone, the effects are LIMITED due to the small area, whereas the reintroduction of wolves in Colorado covers about 22 million acres of land.

But not many wolves will be brought in, likely around 30 or 50 individuals.

Therefore, the impact on ecosystems will occur much more slowly than in Yellowstone.

But I still want to highlight the uniqueness of the situation with the restoration of wolves in Colorado. For the first time in history, the reintroduction will not be managed by the "U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service" (the equivalent of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources), but by another organization. This initiative is in the hands of citizens and is the result of the PEOPLE'S CHOICE, who voted for the protection of wolves under "Proposition 114."

The wolves brought to Colorado were taken from the wild in other states across the U.S. This was done by experienced specialists who used tranquilizer darts and captured the wolves from helicopters. Biologists carefully removed the wolves, loaded them onto planes, and transported them to regions in Colorado.

Each wolf is fitted with special radio collars that allow for long-term monitoring. Location systems and satellite tracking are connected, utilizing modern technological tools that simplify the observation and protection of the animals.

Once, before Europeans occupied North America, up to two million wolves roamed the open lands. Everything was as it should be, in perfect balance, and even the continent's indigenous peoples were harmoniously integrated into the rhythms of nature.

But by the mid-1960s, only 200 to 400 wolf pairs remained in the U.S. that were capable of restoring and maintaining populations. Throughout the last century, wolf numbers plummeted until the Endangered Species Act was signed in 1973, making wolves one of the first mammal species to be listed.

After that, their numbers slightly recovered, and they began living in two populations spread across the United States. One population numbers about 4,500 wolves, while the other ranges from 2,500 to 3,000!

People are constantly frightened by wolves, told that these terrifying predators will come and devour us. Yet, just 100 years ago in the U.S., people coexisted with wolves for millennia without any problems. It's simply a matter of knowledge, which was diligently forgotten when global industrialization began and people finally moved to concrete cities.

So why is the reintroduction of wolves in Colorado important? It's very simple. We are living in the era of the sixth mass extinction on the planet, triggered by HUMANS. Currently, over a million living species are on the brink of complete extinction in the coming decades!

But how do we stop this? How do we address these problems?

It's simple: restore the lost links in biological systems. The reintroduction of important keystone species, such as gray wolves, is one way to halt the destruction of wildlife!

Chapter 6. The significance of the wild wolf in ecosystems

Just recently, it seems last year, a children's book by Isabella Jude and Kim Smith, "Bringing Back the Wolves: How Predators Restore Balance in Ecosystems," was translated into Russian and published in our country. It's actually a remarkable publication. A simple story in language accessible to children about the life of wolves in America.

Why do wolves befriend ravens but not coyotes?

How can a wolf influence rivers and soil moisture retention?

Why is a wolf more of a friend to a rabbit than the other way around?

These are, you know, not really simple questions! With perhaps somewhat simplified answers that a child can understand. With pictures. But that's not the point.

There's a lot of information about wolves. But it's all like: "gray bandit" or "pest." Even the cartoon image of a wolf chasing a rabbit and causing trouble. Which isn't

quite right! And from an ecological standpoint, it's not right at all!

Nature is a unified whole: plants, animals, birds, insects. Any "little bug" is far from "some kind of nuisance"! Everything in the ecosystem depends on each other. Everything influences everything else. Nothing in life is "extra"! Animals deemed "harmful" by humans are just as necessary in a complex biological system as those considered "useful"!

I'll give the example again of how Comrade Mao urged Chinese peasants to fight sparrows so they wouldn't destroy the crops. There were many Chinese, and they killed all the sparrows. As a result, the crops were eaten by caterpillars. Due to the absence of sparrows, they multiplied actively. Beyond measure, without a species to control their numbers. And the Chinese Communist Party and the great Mao himself somehow didn't think about that...

I've probably given the example of sparrows in China ten times. Those who have been reading me for a while will surely remember. The situation with the Yellowstone wolves turned out almost exactly the same: another example of the authorities' misunderstanding of basic ecology, worthy of becoming a textbook case. Alongside

"Comrade Mao's sparrow taming" or the constant genocide of one species or another with the authorities' involvement in Australia's fragile ecosystems.

The history of the wolf in Yellowstone Park is long-standing.

First, the wolves were "genocided," "regulated to zero." Much like what's happening in some of our regions now.

And only in 1995 did scientists manage, with great difficulty, to get permission to restore the wolf population in Yellowstone National Park. Understandably, after "optimizing the wolf population to zero," there were no wild wolf packs in the area. Fourteen wolves were brought from the wilds of Canada and released in the park. Remember, the Chinese also once bought sparrows not only from us but from Canada too?

Then there were two decades of meticulous observation of the region's biocenoses. Then the conclusions of scientific research. And only now, a popular presentation of this LONG story for children.

So what happened after 20 years?

Did the wolves manage to restore Yellowstone's nature, or did the "gray pest" eat everything?

Did the animal or plant life of the park change after the wolves returned?

Did even one rabbit finally survive there?!

And so, researchers found out over 20 years that wolves literally saved the park from degradation.

— In Yellowstone, the number of trees increased tenfold — they were no longer grazed down by herds of deer.

— Because of this, river channels straightened, and their flows stabilized. The rivers became cleaner and deeper.

— Wolves "won the war" for territory with coyotes and reduced their numbers. As a result, rabbits, which coyotes had been destroying, returned to the park. As you can see, the wolf is not the rabbit's enemy in a REAL ECOSYSTEM!

— Populations of waterfowl returned, as their eggs were no longer destroyed by coyotes.

— The number of berries and mushrooms in the park increased. Huge grizzly bears, which had almost disappeared, began to come for them.

These are MODERN views on the ecology of large predators! Such a story.

Once upon a time, wolves roamed the entire North American continent. Powerful wolf packs migrated from the Arctic to Mexico.

But they were almost wiped out at the beginning of the last century due to fear of wolves by animals like... humans. Farmers and hunters were outraged by wolves. They accused wolves of killing livestock and wild animals. Of causing enormous economic damage to humans. And this position not only didn't change but became the official stance of the authorities. Long-range "Winchesters," free shooting at any time of year… In short, there were no wolves left. The wolf population was "regulated."

It's essentially the same as what's happening in our country now!

Some changes did occur, though. Many years later, when there were no wolves left at all, scientists realized that the degradation of ecosystems was DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE ABSENCE OF WOLF PACKS. For many years, environmental specialists worked to restore the wolf population. Now, in America, wolves are under federal protection. Efforts to restore wolf pack numbers continue in Yellowstone and several other areas. This has led to a wide range of studies on what happens

when a predator population is restored. How it affects other animals, the ecosystem as a whole, and even the condition of rivers and streams! These studies are now available. There is a comprehensive body of experience accumulated over many years.

I'm just not sure if any of the "competent and authorized officials" in our country are aware of these studies. Because if we wipe out the wild wolf here now, we'll be "making the same mistake" the Americans did almost a century ago. And then, realizing their error, they spent over twenty years restoring the wolf population! Maybe we should consider someone else's experience and not destroy the RUSSIAN WOLF?

I don't know, maybe we should at least buy some children's books about ecology? Send them to the heads of administrations, various environmental and hunting oversight agencies. Maybe they'll learn something useful from them?

Chapter 7. Saving predators is the key to saving ecosystems

Do you think calls for the complete extermination of wolves based on utterly fabricated reasons are unique? Like, “the big bad wolf,” so let’s “genocide” it for that?! Not a chance!

There are systematic proposals to completely wipe out wild boars. This is supposedly to combat ASF (African Swine Fever). In some regions, a huge portion of the boar population has already been destroyed under this pretext! The consequences of such insane destruction of an IMPORTANT and SIGNIFICANT part of the biocenosis became immediately apparent. In the Far East, tigers began to starve, as boars were their food source. Since the boar population was decimated, tigers have increasingly approached populated areas. What other result could there be?! If you leave no food for the tiger in the taiga, it will, starving (!!!), go looking for food ANYWHERE!

I have no doubt that after the wild pigs, they'd propose to "genocide" the striped cats too. Poachers, considering the huge demand for tiger parts in China for local traditional medicine, would execute the "ultimate measure of social protection by humans" instantly.

But — no way! The tiger is under SPECIAL protection. Various government-presidential programs, which fortunately (!!!), saved this magnificent predator. And only thanks to this did we learn about the immediate sad consequences for the ecosystem of the boar's destruction.

Recently, I started looking into calls for the genocide of beavers. Not even a predator. Not even large. So why are some proposing to "wipe them out"?! Just a dumb passion for killing, or what?! Anyone, as long as they can kill?!

Turns out, "we have too many beavers." Even in Central Russia, beavers have become a nuisance. They build their dams wherever they please. They flood plots of land, even in the Moscow region. And some of the landowners here are not ordinary folks, you can't just mess with them... This, along with claims of excessive swampiness in the region, has been used to justify the need to shoot beavers.

I delved deeper into the issue and found out: yes, there are more beavers now. Some time ago, there was a reintroduction of this species. These large rodents were released where they once thrived but were completely wiped out by humans. Boyars needed beaver hats, so they killed all the beavers for their invaluable pelts. And, many years later, they decided to restore the beavers. This was successfully achieved. The beaver population has grown, but it’s still less than in the recent past in the same regions. Experts can easily assess this, as there are historical estimates of beaver numbers.

And what else did I find? There are studies showing an improvement in the hydrological situation of rivers, likely due to the beaver population's recovery! Beavers have had a VERY SIGNIFICANT impact on hydrology, literally saving small rivers from drying up! Consequently, saving local ecosystems from dying.

See! Killing off beavers, boars, wolves — it’s a one-way street! It’s a path to the degradation and death of the local ecosystem as a whole!

Recently, a major international study emerged, convincingly showing this on a global scale. Fascinating and somewhat unexpected conclusions! The authors show that destroyed ecosystems can be restored to a

state close to what existed before if each is repopulated with just one to three animal species. Data analysis identified 20 specific species. Surprisingly, these are LARGE MAMMALS, whose importance was previously underestimated. If they are correctly reintroduced, a significant part of the world can be revitalized!

The work was coordinated by Carly Vynne from “RESOLVE” in a UN program. Initially, they sought ways to impact local biomes with the greatest potential for restoration. Surprisingly, large and well-known species have this potential! Thirteen herbivorous mammals and seven predator species.

So, I didn’t quite title this chapter accurately — only seven of these particularly important species are predators.

It turned out that the presence of each such species in a region affects the entire food chain. The position at the top of the food chain proved to be key! The influence extends to the lowest levels — even soil invertebrates and bacteria become more numerous and diverse as a result of the impact, for example, of wolves.

The work was extensive. It was only possible thanks to a large volume of statistics and modern computers, like many such complex studies in recent years. They

compared current environmental conditions with those of five hundred years ago. Before intercontinental travel and the industrial revolution led to the accelerated disappearance of a huge number of species. Look at these interesting indicators:

— over 500 years, only 16% of the land has maintained wild mammal communities in a stable form;

— only 6% of the land has communities that may be stable for a longer time.

Nevertheless, the conclusions are that existing intact biomes can be relatively easily increased by half. Not everything is hopeless yet! There aren't many places where lost life can be restored. But they exist. Mainly in the Far North and some parts of Africa and South America. In the study, scientists identified 30 ecoregions that are still suitable for implementing such a species reintroduction program.

Do you know which species they propose to RESTORE URGENTLY?

For Europe—beaver, bison, reindeer, wolf, and lynx.

These are the species that are being ruthlessly destroyed right now! And there are even proposals to systematically exterminate wolves and beavers for various reasons!

For a significant part of Asia, according to scientists, only two species could become key: the wolf and the wild horse.

Just like that!

The wolf is not a "gray bandit," but a KEYSTONE SPECIES for the ecoregions of Eurasia!

And beavers shouldn't be eradicated just because they bother some vacation homeowners!

Chapter 8. Wolves. Genocide

A mature wolf can run on snow at speeds up to 50 kilometers per hour.

In a sprint.

For just a few minutes.

For example, in a final desperate dash. Trying to escape an approaching snowmobile.

The snowmobile races at a cruising speed of 120 kilometers per hour.

As long as there's fuel.

The snowmobile is "iron," it doesn't get tired.

You can simply run over wolves with a snowmobile.

And that's exactly what's done. It recently came to light in our country with a scandal. But it was just an isolated incident: they posted the video online themselves.

Just like that...

What chance do wolves have against the wealthy with powerful snowmobiles?!

Yes, the wolf has no chance at all!

The forces are too unequal. Even a powerful predator is too weak against deadly technology!

And this is "hunting"?!

Is this "noble hunting," I ask you?!!

This is not hunting, but the cruel killing of helpless creatures! Yes, yes — the wolf WAS a formidable predator BEFORE it started being "genocided" for sadistic "fun"!

Think again: wolves earned their reputation as "dangerous predators" long ago. Very long ago! When there wasn't even a "guy with a gun on skis," let alone firearms! And now it's just a fairy tale. "Ancestral memory," so to speak. "Oh, oh, oh! Fear the wolf!" Legendary times, really, when humans and wolves were equals. When bearded men hunted bears with spears, and that was cool. A "spear," by the way, is not a very long pole with an extended blade. Not a ton-heavy snowmobile going over 100 kilometers per hour. Not a helicopter. Not a large-caliber automatic carbine with powerful optics. Just a stick with a sharpened piece of metal at the end.

And now the image of the "fearsome wolf" is skillfully exploited by paid media to "push" for unrestricted wolf culling. Do you know why?

Because THERE ARE VERY FEW WOLVES LEFT!

And in many regions, wolves have been completely wiped out. Meanwhile, the number of wealthy people wanting to kill for fun has NOT DECREASED! And organizing paid killings is a very profitable business for some.

Just like that. Just business. Just money. Nothing personal: just another type of blood business.

And "... on the snow tattooed with blood

The inscription melts: we are no longer wolves!"

Why do they kill?

For photos! For "videos."

To line up the corpses and take pictures with them. Or to shove guns into the throat of a dying creature with boisterous whooping and cursing.

Wolf meat isn't eaten. Wolves are hunted for so-called "sporting" reasons. Wolf fat isn't particularly popular for medicinal purposes, unlike badger or bear fat. Wolf paws aren't bought for Chinese medicine, unlike tiger paws. The fur can be used to make boots or coats. So,

there's no practical sense to it. The only purpose is killing for the sake of killing! The wolf's reputation as a dangerous predator is its downfall — it's just cool to pose over a wolf's corpse!

So, who's the real "bloodthirsty monster" here, I ask you? Certainly not the "gray wolf"!

The "toughness" of those who pose with photos over carcasses is, frankly, questionable! There's absolutely no risk in modern hunting. Well, unless you flip over on a snowmobile while drunk and break your neck. Or fall out of a helicopter. Or the helicopter crashes into a mountain. Yes, those things happen. They even shoot each other, mistaking a person for a bear. Or completely random people, firing at noises or shooting into bushes.

The current situation is such that, as a target for "status predator killings," the wolf is the most accessible. And cheap. The tiger is protected—they panicked when it was nearly wiped out. The snow leopard is protected. For bears, at least some kind of license is required. So the poor wolf is left "to take the hit"! The urge to kill is strong, but there's no one left: they've all been slaughtered. And if we don't act now, if we don't draw public attention to the genocide of wolves—they'll finish them off too!

The real situation with wolves, in brief, is this:

— The number of wolves has catastrophically decreased in recent years. In some places by half, in others to zero.

— Wolves are approaching populated areas more frequently due to hunger. Even more so because of the destruction and SMALL NUMBERS of wolf packs. All zoologist experts say this directly: there are catastrophically FEW wolves, which is why lone wolves attack dogs on the outskirts of taiga villages. Without a pack, they simply cannot hunt.

— Real wolf attacks on humans and the presence of dangerous large wolf packs were last recorded after World War II. Back then, wolves started feeding on the corpses of those killed in the frontline areas and later perceived humans as prey. But not for long. Predators “trained on humans” were quickly shot, and it never happened again. Normally, wolves are cautious. They don’t see humans as prey at all; in fact, they avoid them. Attacks on dogs are because wolves see dogs as members of a rival pack, as enemies.

— The media-fueled hysteria about the danger of wolves and the permission for unlimited (up to complete extermination) shooting is because there are VERY FEW wolves left. There simply aren’t enough wolves as

hunting targets for everyone who wants to kill.

It’s time to objectively change our attitude towards wolves!

If we don’t do this now, soon the wolf will become an endangered species. With serious consequences for the biological systems in which the wolf is an essential component.

Right now, we are witnessing the genocide of another inhabitant of the Russian Taiga—the Russian Wolf.

Chapter 9. So how many wolves do we have?

Spoiler alert:

I will provide OFFICIAL statistical data on the wolf population in our country.

These data are NOT ACCURATE. To put it mildly.

The OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS themselves state that there is NO ACCURATE STATISTICS. Estimates are made haphazardly, statistics are pulled "out of thin air."

WE DO NOT KNOW HOW MANY WOLVES WE HAVE — THE STATISTICS ARE UNRELIABLE.

I will present the latest summarized data from the State Report "On the State and Protection of the Environment of the Russian Federation" for 2020 by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Russian Federation:

"The wolf population in the Russian Federation from 2010 to 2017 remained at a high level, ranging from 47.0 to 57.0 thousand individuals;

in 2018 and 2020, the highest figures in the last 20 years were recorded: 65.9 thousand and 66.9 thousand individuals, respectively.

In 2020, the wolf population increased by 6.9% compared to the previous period in 2019, or by 4.3 thousand individuals.

In 2020, about 70% of the total wolf population in the Russian Federation was found in the Siberian and Far Eastern federal districts (22.5 thousand and 25.1 thousand individuals, respectively), which is 3.5 thousand individuals (7.9%) higher than the total figure for 2019. In the ETR (European territory of Russia, approx.), as in previous years, the highest numbers were noted in the Northwestern and North Caucasian federal districts — 5.5 thousand individuals each, as well as in the Southern federal district — 3.7 thousand individuals."

Statistics for previous years according to the Federal State Budgetary Scientific Institution "All-Russian Research Institute of Game Management and Fur Farming named after Professor B. M. Zhitkov."

Scientifically based proposals for the State System for Monitoring Resources of Major Game Species in the Russian Federation. Kirov, 2017.

"Wolf.

The population of this predator in Russia in 2017 decreased by 9.6% compared to 2016 and amounts to 47.6 thousand individuals. This is above the average for previous five-year periods:

— period 1996–2000 (41.5±1.04 thousand),

— 2001–2005 (40.4±1.61 thousand),

— 2006–2010 (40.0±1.12 thousand)

and 2010–2015 (37.7±1.64 thousand individuals).

In 16 regions, the wolf population increased, in 27 — decreased, and in the rest — remained at the same level. Few wolves (no more than 20–25 individuals) are found only in 6 regions: Ivanovo, Kursk, Lipetsk, Oryol, Tula, and Samara regions (Appendix I, table 7).

A SURVEY showed that compared to the previous year, the wolf population noticeably decreased (although it remains unacceptably high) in Khakassia (by 1.68 thousand individuals), Kalmykia (by 1.09), Irkutsk region (by 1.15), and in the Trans-Baikal Territory (by 0.72).

AN INDIRECT INDICATOR CONFIRMING POPULATION TRENDS IS THE NUMBER OF WOLVES TAKEN BY ONE HUNTER DURING THE WINTER SEASON.

If in the 2015–2016 season, hunting correspondents noted an average take of 2.83 wolves, then in the past season this figure was 2.49.

Unfortunately, there is no sign of a turnaround in the wolf situation yet, and further population growth can be expected. If we calculate how many wolves should inhabit Russia based on the number of their prey and the wolf-prey ratios recommended by scientists (Pimlott, 1967; Mech, 1966), the number would be 9,600–10,300 individuals, which is almost five times less than the actual number. This situation can be described as catastrophic.

According to available data from state hunting registries, the number of animals removed is at best half of the existing population and cannot ensure a noticeable reduction, as only the removal of 84% of this predator's population subsequently leads to sufficient depression of its population (Biryukov, Makarov, 2002). In most regions, the number of wolves removed is several times lower than the existing population. Only in 9 regions does the number of wolves taken exceed 100 individuals, in 5 regions — about 200 individuals, in Dagestan and Chukotka — more than 400, in the Trans-Baikal Territory — about 700 animals. Overall, across the country, the wolf take does not exceed 9 thousand

individuals."

Note the description of assessment methods highlighted by me in bold:

SURVEY OF HUNTING USERS.

INDIRECT INDICATORS CONFIRMING POPULATION TRENDS — THE NUMBER OF WOLVES TAKEN BY ONE HUNTER DURING THE WINTER SEASON.

To put it mildly, VERY APPROXIMATE AND SUBJECTIVE METHODS!

Next, another quote.

This time from the statistics of the Federal State Budgetary Institution "Federal Center for Hunting Management."

A quote that comprehensively characterizes the inaccuracies of OFFICIAL STATISTICS:

"In recent years, the most critical changes in population estimates have been observed in otters and wolves.

According to state monitoring data from 2012-2013, the otter population in Russia was over 100,000 individuals. Compared to the long-term average, the otter population 'increased' by more than 20,000 individuals. THE SHARP INCREASE IN THIS SPECIES IS DUE TO UNRELIABLE INFORMATION sent to the authorized

body of the Tomsk region by a hunting user who determined an excessively inflated population. Without these erroneous data, the otter population in Russia remains stable at 80,000-85,000 individuals.

The total wolf population in Russia, according to state monitoring, was estimated at 44,400 individuals in 2013, which is more than 13,000 fewer than the previous year's figure. The decrease in the wolf population occurred primarily due to the correction made in 2013 by the authorized body of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) to the 2012 estimate (the population was corrected from 10,700 individuals to 2,600 individuals). Overall, the wolf population in Russia has remained at a high level in recent years, totaling 50,000 individuals."

Once again, attention:

"THE POPULATION WAS CORRECTED FROM 10,700 INDIVIDUALS TO 2,600 INDIVIDUALS"!

One simple question: With such scales of 'corrections,' can such 'statistics' be trusted at all?!

Considering the statistical methods and 'minor inaccuracies,' I draw a clear conclusion—

THE WOLF STATISTICS CANNOT BE TRUSTED AT ALL!

IN ESSENCE, WE HAVE NO STATISTICS ON THE WOLF POPULATION, ONLY THE PERSONAL OPINIONS OF INTERESTED HUNTING USERS!

Chapter 10. Wolves of Kazakhstan

A small example from a neighboring country. And note, we share not only a vast border with Kazakhstan but also, you could say, "shared" wolves! Wolves are nomads. Packs migrate across the border too.

So: the East Kazakhstan Region borders our Altai. And the entire steppe north of Kazakhstan borders our southern steppes. The population of animals migrating over long distances is SHARED. Biological systems are interconnected regardless of national borders.

According to Kazakh zoologists and ecologists:

— the low wolf population is observed throughout the country and is becoming a real problem;

— over the last 30 years, the number of wolves in Kazakhstan has decreased fivefold;

— if in 1988 there were 61,000 wolves in the Kazakh SSR, now there are only about 12,000 left.

Let me clarify: official data from Kazakhstan's government agencies on wolf numbers are slightly higher. But independent experts are sure that these

figures cannot be trusted. At all. Absolutely. I completely agree with this. It reflects the situation in our country as well. No official bothers with a real assessment of wolf numbers. At best, statistics are just rewritten year after year, slightly adjusting last year's figures. Estimates are made based on: "Hey, buddy, do you have wolves in your area?" "Yeah, lots and lots, man! Took a sheep, listen!" "Well, let's record it: wolves have multiplied incredibly, population control is needed."

And such "shepherd's word" statistics end up in official documents. And based on THIS kind of statistics, "responsible and competent" decisions are made.

Then it turns out that "wolves" weren't seen in the settlement: they were just stray dogs.

Local "experts" are categorically unable to distinguish a "wolf" track from a dog's.

And it's actually jackals that have multiplied and are causing serious problems for people, not wolves. Jackals have proliferated precisely in the absence of wolves, and because of the absence of wolves: wolves ruthlessly eliminated jackals as competitors. With no wolves, jackals took their place in the biological system. Where one wolf lived, now there are ten jackals.

Let's pause here to consider the significance of the wolf. What is already manifesting fully in Kazakhstan's ecosystems. What ecologists in Kazakhstan are ALREADY sounding the alarm about.

First.

Until recently, wolves kept jackal numbers in check. Jackals used to inhabit Southern Kazakhstan, along the Syr Darya. For instance, in the Almaty Region, jackals appeared only about 3 to 5 years ago. Despite jackals typically living in lowlands, they've been spotted in the mountains. In the Aksai Gorge. In forests at an altitude of about 1,300 meters above sea level. The jackal is a completely alien species to ecosystems in regions like Almaty and Mangystau.

But they reproduce very quickly. And have already become a dangerous invasive species in areas where they were previously absent. By rough estimates, there are already at least 30,000 jackals in Kazakhstan. You understand, the estimate of jackal numbers is quite approximate! And their population is growing rapidly! The expansion of their habitat is also linked to climate change. But that's not certain. What is certain is that the rapid population growth and habitat expansion of jackals are clearly linked to the disappearance of wolves.

Human regulation of jackal numbers doesn't work: hunters show no interest in jackals! It's not cool to kill a jackal. Like, look, I killed a jackal, I'm a cool hunter?! Ugh! They'd just laugh at such a "notable trophy." But killing a wolf is quite prestigious.

And so the place of the killed wolves is taken by jackals. Several dozen in place of one wolf.

Second.

Wolves primarily eat rodents. Ground squirrels, jerboas, mice, etc., in large numbers. Including marmots, which is especially important. This reduces the likelihood of spreading diseases they carry. Plague is the most striking example, mostly associated with marmots. But other dangerous infections too.

The jackal, replacing the wolf in the ecosystem in tenfold numbers, eats everything. It's a so-called "super-generalist." It eats hares, pheasants, ducks, and other birds. Especially actively and effectively — the eggs and young of various birds.

Third.

"The wolf is the forest's janitor." Many have probably heard this saying. The fact is, wolves often kill weak and sick animals. Thanks to them, other species are rejuvenated. For example, a mountain goat with mange,

weakened and limping, starts to lag behind the herd. If it lives, it will infect other goats in a chain. If wolves eat it, the problem disappears.

Human hunters, competing with wolves at the "top of the food chain," do the exact opposite. The biggest and strongest animals are shot as status trophies. If it's a mountain goat, it must be the most beautiful, with the most magnificent horns. A half-dead, flea-ridden one — nobody wants it!

What do Kazakh ecologists propose? How, in their opinion, can the total extermination of wolves be prevented?

Biologists, game managers, and zoologists propose moving wolves to the category of species that are official hunting targets. Sounds a bit paradoxical, right? To understand the meaning of this proposal, some legal nuances need to be explained.

The animal world in Kazakhstan is divided into four categories:

— species that are hunting targets;

— rare species threatened with extinction;

— species whose numbers are subject to regulation (including wolves and jackals);

— species with scientific and ecological significance.

If wolves were at least reclassified from "regulated" species to "game," experts believe there would be at least a systematic accounting of their numbers. Currently, wolves can be hunted year-round. Essentially, without restriction. Hunters even receive small payments for each "gray pelt" they bring in. You can hunt wolves simply by obtaining a document titled "Permit for the Removal of Species Whose Numbers Are Subject to Regulation" through a government service.

This permit is issued free of charge and is valid for one year. You can kill wolves whenever you want. "Without trial or investigation," so to speak. There is only a limit on the number of wolves that can be taken. For instance, no more than three per hunter in 2019. The wolf culling limit in the Akmola, West Kazakhstan, Karaganda, Kostanay, and Pavlodar regions was restricted to 10% of the total wolf population. A population that is, accordingly, purely formal. A population that no one has actually counted! In other regions, up to 30–40% of this "hypothetical population" can be culled.

That's why ecologists suggest at least reclassifying wolves as "game" species, so at least their numbers can be more accurately tracked.

However, the relevant ministry in Kazakhstan, despite ecologists' suggestions, firmly states that despite the KNOWN decline in the wolf population in the country, there are no plans to reclassify them.

And in Kazakhstan, there are no specific programs aimed at regulating the number of wolves and preserving them as a species, as you might understand.

Just as there are no such programs in our country.

And they are necessary! Otherwise, wolves will have to be reclassified from "species whose numbers are subject to regulation" directly to "rare species threatened with extinction"!

Let me remind you: a REAL accounting of the wolf population IS NOT BEING DONE! And it seems very likely that wolves may already be at risk of extermination.

Chapter 11. Jackals of the Russian North

Jackals were making their way through the snowy taiga of the Russian North, surrounding their prey…

What nonsense! you might say. What jackals in the boreal belt of the Russian Taiga?! There have never been any jackals in the Russian Taiga!

And you would, unfortunately, be wrong! Yes, there never were. But now they exist and are rapidly multiplying, occupying more and more territories!

Fires. Floods. Invasions of harmful insects. And now, an invasion of jackals!

In February 2021, a jackal was caught in a trap on the outskirts of the village of Tsimola in the Arkhangelsk region. This is currently the northernmost point where a jackal has been reliably recorded.

You can look at a map to see how far north that is! This is the boreal taiga of the Arkhangelsk region!

The overall history of this species in our country is as follows.

In modern Russia, jackals used to inhabit only the subtropical forests of the Black Sea and Caspian coasts of the Caucasus. And even then, only partially, in small isolated areas. In the summer and fall, jackals would regularly migrate up the southern and southeastern slopes of the Greater Caucasus Range. Up to about 700–800 meters above sea level. Until the 1950s, the northern boundary of their range NEVER rose above Novorossiysk!

The jackal was considered a rather rare and peripheral species in Russia. Hunting them was not prestigious. Jackals that ventured into agricultural areas were shot only by local residents.

Moving along the Black Sea coast, jackals first reached Anapa. Then, skirting the Caucasus Range from the northwest, they populated the entire Pre-Caucasus region.

In 1967, jackals appeared in the forests of Urup. Their arrival led to a rapid decline in the hare population. Introduced raccoons in the Urup district virtually disappeared. This is a protected area in the Krasnodar region. A place where research and observations are

actively conducted and have been conducted. There is data for this area, but for other areas, such data is either unavailable or incomplete. But jackals are exterminating everything alive around them everywhere.

Even in the treeless Krasnoarmeysky district of the Krasnodar region, jackals successfully breed in narrow reed strips between rice paddies and wipe out all other species! They began to infiltrate here from Dagestan also around the 1960s. By the 1980s, they had settled in the Kuban delta and entered the Rostov region for the first time.

By 2015, the jackal population in the Rostov region had reached critical levels. Their favorite habitats became the Don delta and the dense reed thickets along the Western Manych River. In 2014, the Rostov regional government was forced to offer bounties for shooting jackals. Here, jackals destroyed many other species and caused a sharp change in local ecosystems.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, jackals have begun their triumphant march into the taiga and northern territories.

Northern jackals are heavier, shaggier, and darker than southern populations. Those who have encountered them speak of their astonishing fertility. And also of the

increased aggressiveness of the animals. Essentially, they talk about the fierce viciousness of the northern jackals!

Although their genotype is the same, they have changed in appearance. In fact, one could speak of the formation, judging by phenotypic manifestations, of a new northern subspecies.

The habits of northern jackals, their type and way of life, are also changing. But they are poorly studied. The spread of this predatory pest is simply rapid!

In 2011, the first case of a jackal being found in Belarus was recorded. In November 2018, a jackal was already registered in the north of the republic, in the Vitebsk region. Belarusian experts say that due to mild winters, this species has begun to expand throughout the country, including its northern regions. Officially, jackals were included in the list of mammals of Belarus in 2017.

In Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the first jackals were spotted in 2013. Zoologists believe they came from Ukraine through Belarus.

Since 2013, Estonians have begun shooting jackals. As soon as it became known about the appearance of this alien species in the country. In 2019, 64 jackals were

killed. In 2021 — more than 200. However, it seems that even this has not slowed the spread of the new species across the country. In 2020, Estonian zoologists counted 27 territorially stable groups of jackals. And the number of jackals is rapidly growing, despite active efforts to combat them.

In our country, reports of jackals appearing in boreal taiga forests also began to surface starting from 2010–2015. Now in Central Russia and the Northwest — in the Moscow and Leningrad regions, there are also sightings of jackals. Already after the discovery near the village of Tsimola in the Arkhangelsk region (the northernmost point where a jackal has been seen), a jackal was found in the Vologda region. Very recently — in the east of the Komi Republic.

Karelian zoologists believe that there is a significant population of this invasive species in Karelia as well. The region is sparsely populated, and scientists' observations of the taiga's nature are sporadic and incomplete. Indirectly, the presence of jackals in Karelia is also indicated by the presence of these predators in neighboring Finland. A jackal was caught on camera in Rautavaara in Eastern Finland in 2019. According to Finnish zoology professor Heikki Henttonen, jackals will soon become part of Finland's fauna. The scientist

stated that these predators have already been encountered in Southeast Finland repeatedly and for a long time. The photo from Rautavaara only confirmed that jackals are actively spreading further north.

Why is this happening? And what is the danger of the spread of jackals in the Northern Russian Taiga?

— Jackals have a different type of diet than wolves. They are especially dangerous to populations of waterfowl, as they actively destroy nests with eggs.

— Jackals live and hunt in pairs, unlike wolves, which form packs. With high fertility rates (from 4-6 to 8 or more pups), this leads to very rapid expansion into adjacent territories. Young jackals disperse tens and hundreds of kilometers from their parental territory, forming their own pairs.

— Jackals adapt very well to humans. They are not afraid of people at all. They have been seen in Estonia at dumps around Tallinn. In Sochi, jackals constantly inhabit dumps and outskirts. They calmly enter cities, climb into trash containers, or even overturn garbage bins to get food. In northern territories, such flexibility will allow the species to survive and spread easily, even when other species struggle due to cold, hunger, or heavy snow cover.

— In the south, more than half of a jackal's diet is plant-based. In the absence of grapes, melons, or watermelons in the north, jackals will more actively destroy local species: small animals and birds, eggs, frogs, and the like. This will make them even more harmful to ecosystems than in the south.

— Jackals have 78 (2n) chromosomes. Among the canid family, domestic dogs and coyotes are closest to jackals, having a similar number of chromosomes. This makes the issue of crossbreeding between jackals and dogs very dangerous. Official representatives of science or officials actively avoid this slippery topic, although one well-known hybrid is the Sulimov dog. Zoologists say that jackals were the ancestors of many dog breeds. Practitioners have repeatedly stated and written that jackals freely crossbreed with stray dogs on the outskirts of populated areas.

— Jackals are extremely cunning animals. They rarely get caught in traps. They can easily distinguish a hunter with a gun from a person without a weapon who poses no threat to them. They do not take poisoned food. As a result, combating the spread of jackals is akin to fighting gray crows or rats—very difficult.

— Jackals spread many infections. Both distemper and rabies, a variety of parasites, and much more. The particular danger of jackals spreading north is that they bring with them all the southern infections and parasites that were previously absent in the north. This is dangerous not only for humans but for all wild species living in the Russian Taiga. Taiga species have no immunity to what the jackal brings. From the south and from the dumps. For wild species, this is an obvious risk of complete extinction during epidemics.

This is the situation with the spread of jackals northward in the European part of our country and the continent as a whole.

The adaptability of this species to northern conditions is very alarming! Noted are the thick fur that jackals have developed and the change in diet, moving away from plant-based food, which is scarce here.

A separate topic is the spread of jackals in Kazakhstan. The East Kazakhstan region borders our Altai. This is an accessible route for jackals to penetrate through Altai into Siberia and spread further across Siberia. In the republics of the former USSR, jackals have spread from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya to the mountains of Kazakhstan. They climb to altitudes over a thousand

meters, which was not observed before. And this happened in a very short time, since the mid-20th century.

Fires. Floods. Insect pest epidemics. Invasive species spreading quickly on their own and occupying new territories. Invasive species introduced by humans.

The common factor in all this is human activity. All these disasters in the Russian Taiga are consequences of large-scale human interference in ecosystems.

This requires a reassessment of our relationship with the taiga. A rejection of the technocratic approach and interaction with complex biogeocenoses.

Chapter 12. So how dangerous are predators?

Objections to banning hunting for entertainment are often justified by the claim that dangerous predators attack people.

Wolves, bears—they should all be exterminated on suspicion of attacking humans. Some even go so far as to propose the complete eradication of species!

There are proposals for the total extermination of wild boar populations due to suspicions of spreading African swine fever.

This is an extreme, radical approach. It's fear. It's what people suggest out of fear, without knowing or understanding the actual level of danger.

Psychologists say that fear of large predators is natural for humans. "Genetic," even, if you will. For some people, it reaches the level of a phobia, meaning an uncontrollable, irrational fear.

On the other hand, predator attacks on humans do occur. In a small percentage of cases, predators even kill people.

Both the fear of predators and actual predator attacks on humans are facts.

But here's another fact—people's phobias about predators and the rare cases of predator attacks on humans are exploited by those who profit from hunting. Hunting is a business. And the biggest profits come from hunting large predators—wealthy people are most willing to pay for such trophies!

And, of course, the media eagerly sensationalizes isolated incidents when a wild animal kills a person! It's a scandal, a hype!

Let's look at the real numbers, the statistics.

I came across a good global review from 2019 on brown bear attacks on humans in the journal Scientific Reports (“Brown bear attacks on humans: a worldwide perspective”).

— Reports of 664 brown bear attacks on humans worldwide, resulting in physical injuries or death between 2000 and 2015;

— 111 cases of bear attacks on humans in Russia over 15 years;

— Of the 664 bear attacks on humans worldwide, 85.7% resulted in injuries;

— Only 14.3% of the attacks resulted in fatalities.

Let's compare now!

— Fewer than 10 bear attacks on humans per year in our country (fewer than 45 per year worldwide). Accordingly, not all, but less than 15% of such cases are fatal—extremely rare!

— Between 380,000 and 450,000 (!) Russians are injured by bites from DOMESTIC dogs each year! (These are data from those who sought medical attention for bites, I agree! But there are also serious injuries, and fatalities from dog attacks. Also isolated cases, like with wild animal attacks, but such cases exist!)

— Fewer than 600 people die annually worldwide in plane crashes—this allows airlines to boast about the safety of air transport and use it as an advertisement for safety: Look how few fatalities there are! In the last 10 years, there have been more than 100 plane crashes worldwide, with over 3,000 deaths. This is considered "few" and "a completely safe mode of transport."

I understand that if someone has a phobia of wild animal attacks, statistics won't convince them of anything! Just like someone with a fear of flying is unlikely to be thrilled at the prospect of boarding a plane. I'm merely showing that the danger of wild predators to humans is greatly exaggerated and used by commercial hunting lobbyists for their own purposes! Objectively, more people are injured and killed by DOMESTIC dogs (by orders of magnitude!) than by wild animals. And more people die in car accidents in a DAY than from both domesticated and wild predators in a YEAR.

Wild predator attacks on humans do happen. No question—predator culling is necessary in some cases. But it should be done by professionals and only when necessary. It shouldn't be a bloody spectacle for those who just want to kill!

And media headlines like: “Rising number of victims: how hungry bears hunt Russians” or “In search of food: how bears maim and kill Russians” are just "clickbait" headlines! They play on emotions, provoke ancient phobias in readers—"horror stories" that only distract from real existing problems.

So: RUMORS AND GOSSIP ABOUT THE DANGER OF WILD ANIMALS TO HUMANS ARE, TO PUT IT MILDLY, GREATLY EXAGGERATED!

And they are actively used by:

1. The media for hype and flashy headlines.

2. Commercial hunting lobbyists to defend their right to continue making money from such a bloody "sport."

If we look at statistics, rather than reading horror stories in the media, then:

1. Hunting dogs injure and maim more people than wild wolves and bears combined. There are no statistics on this, but it's clear these aren't the "lap dogs" of city aunts. These are packs of feral dogs near populated areas (another big problem, by the way, is the destruction of wildlife in parks and forests by these feral dogs!); these are service and "fighting" breeds; and these include hunters' dogs. If someone unfamiliar with the topic immediately pictures a cute spaniel as a hunting dog, that's not quite accurate! I've seen training centers where dogs are trained on bear cubs. It's a horrifying sight! And believe me, these dogs are definitely not spaniels!

2. There is a danger of wild predators attacking humans. In necessary cases, culling is needed. But this should be done out of necessity, not used as a pretext for organizing commercial hunts.

3. The real fight against the danger of wild predators to humans is education! Tourists visiting the Russian Taiga should at least know the basic rules of behavior when encountering wild animals!

For example: I came across a news article about a bear attack. The story goes like this: a cute bear cub wandered onto a garden plot. The owner came out, petted, and fed the adorable creature some candy. A little later, the mother bear arrived. The result: the kind person was hospitalized with multiple injuries. Question: could it be that the person was not only "kind" but also "uneducated"? In 47% of cases, people were attacked by mother bears when they found themselves near cubs.

A basic understanding of predator behavior—and 50% of attacks simply wouldn't happen! And there's no need to kill anyone for this!

Chapter 13. Almost wolves, half-wolves, and just dogs

Just a big quote from the Instagram of the Committee on Animal World of the Leningrad Region of the Russian Federation.

“In the past week, 11 more wolves have been taken in the region. In the current hunting season, within the framework of amateur and sports hunting (since August 1, 2022), 118 wolves have been taken. In the Volkhov district, 18 wolves have been taken since the start of the season, in Kirovsky — 11, in Kirishsky — 13, in Luzhsky — 14, in Slantsevsky — 12, in Tikhvinsky — 7, and in Tosnensky — 4 wolves.

OFTEN, THE COMMITTEE RECEIVES INFORMATION FROM CITIZENS OR THROUGH THE MEDIA ABOUT WOLF SIGHTINGS, BUT UPON DETAILED EXAMINATION OF THE REPORTS, IT IS FOUND THAT THESE ARE STRAY DOGS IN POPULATED AREAS THAT CITIZENS MISTAKE FOR WOLVES.

On February 2 and 3, our inspectors investigated reports of an alleged repeat wolf sighting in the village of Ryabovo. The investigation was conducted jointly with a representative of the Ryabovo GP administration of the Tosnensky district of the Leningrad region, gamekeepers from Fauna LLC, and a representative of the veterinary department. The facts of a repeat sighting were not confirmed,

TRACKING ACTIVITY REVEALED THAT THE TRACKS BELONGED TO A DOG.

We address all reports, but once again recommend keeping your pets under supervision and not allowing them to roam freely. Predator population control activities continue. In the photo — a Siberian Husky, one of many dog breeds that visually resemble a wolf.”

I highlighted the most important phrases in large print to draw attention to them.

As you can see, the relevant government bodies are working.

As you can see, they inform citizens in real-time on social media about the situation and their actions.

As you can see, wolves that approach human dwellings are doomed: they are eliminated quickly and efficiently.

— 118 wolves have been killed in the Leningrad region since the start of this hunting season, from August 1, 2021;

— in the last hunting season, 2020/2021, 264 wolves were killed, again, in the Leningrad region alone.

And experts clearly state that IT'S NOT ALWAYS WOLVES.

Very often, these are packs of feral dogs. There are large dogs that can indeed be easily mistaken for a wolf. Especially, say, at dusk. Especially by someone who has been attacked by predators.

Not wolves.

Dogs!

I'm not saying there are no wolf attacks on humans. Unfortunately, there are. And unfortunately, they have increased in recent years. There have even been cases of people dying from wolf attacks, which hadn't been recorded for several decades. Experts unequivocally link this to the destruction of wild wolf populations and the emergence of secondary synanthropic wolf populations.

When their natural habitat is disrupted, when packs die, surviving lone wolves come to populated areas. Their behavior and lifestyle change. They become atypical for

wild wolves. Dumps. Feral dog packs on the outskirts. Then targeted hunting of dogs, which have become a familiar prey, right in the yards. And even attacks on humans, near the dumps where the wolf has lived for some time and has stopped fearing humans as a result.

And attacks by feral DOG packs on people — that's a whole separate issue! Especially in recent years!

The fact is, in 2018, a humane law was passed in our country prohibiting the killing of stray dogs. Even those that attack people. They can only be placed in shelters or released back into their “natural habitat.”

The question, of course, is interesting: What is the “natural habitat” of a pack of stray dogs?!

In general, there's an “open license” on wolves. But regulating the number of dogs has become impossible. And, naturally, the dogs have multiplied incredibly and started attacking their benefactors…

And “dogs” include large breeds, no less in size or aggression than wolves. And unlike wild wolves, they have no fear of humans.

Understand me correctly, I have nothing against our four-legged friends. But only friends who are fully under the control of responsible owners! And these owners are accountable for them! There is no “natural habitat” for

packs of feral dogs on the outskirts of populated areas, nor can there be! In this case, I side with the victims torn apart and bitten by man-eating dogs…

BY DOGS, not WOLVES!

It must be understood that stray dogs forming packs can be just as dangerous as wolf packs. Moreover, it seems (and animal behavior specialists say this!) that it is the packs of feral dogs that lure synanthropic lone wolves to venture into populated areas for prey.

The statistics on DOG attacks are truly horrifying! “The wolf doesn't even come close,” as they say!

— In 2021 alone, there were 333,000 reported cases of citizens bitten by dogs.

— The number of people mauled is in the dozens.

— In some cities, a state of emergency is declared due to the excessive aggression of stray DOG packs, not wolves.

Here are just a few notorious examples off the top of my head:

— May 2021. In Samara, dogs completely tore the scalp off a pensioner, and the woman died.

— November 2021. In Langepas, a pack of stray dogs mauled a woman. She died in the hospital from her injuries.

— December 2021. Man-eating dogs attacked a woman in Yakutsk. An associate professor at the North-Eastern Federal University was killed.

— January 2022. In Domna, Zabaykalsky Krai, a pack killed a 7-year-old girl.

— January 2022. The mauled body of a 58-year-old man was found in a wasteland near Astrakhan.

— February 10, 2022. In Pereslavl-Zalessky, a woman was taken to the hospital from a garage cooperative area with dog bite wounds. She died in intensive care an hour later.

I present these horrifying facts not to scare, but to provide an understanding of the real situation.

The wild wolf is not dangerous to people. It should remain in its natural habitat, away from humans. It is ESSENTIAL to PROTECT it to prevent the formation of synanthropic secondary wolf populations on the outskirts of populated areas.

And yes: let's assess the dangers adequately! Packs of feral dogs are significantly more dangerous than wolves. And we create them ourselves. Just as we force surviving wolves to approach populated areas, creating secondary synanthropic wolf populations with behavior entirely uncharacteristic of wild wolves.

For reference:

Synanthropic organisms (synanthropes) (from the ancient Greek "together-with-human") are animals, plants, and microorganisms whose way of life is associated with humans, their dwellings, and the landscapes created or altered by them.

Some people in cities deliberately feed certain animals or birds. For example, stray dogs. And feral dog packs, in turn, become bait and food for wolves, driven by hunger and the collapse of their pack from the wild closer to humans.

Chapter 14. Are wolves coming to town?

Have the wolves gotten so brazen that they're roaming Red Square and scaring tourists in the heart of Moscow?!

Well, almost! Just 40 kilometers from Moscow. Odintsovo District, near Golitsyno. In January 2021, three wolves were casually wandering through populated areas. They rummaged through trash, approached stores, and came near people. Veterinarians and hunting inspectors searched for the predators for a long time after citizens reported them. Catching them also took a long time. It turned out they had escaped from someone's private property.

They were kept in captivity on a private plot in the village of Gryaz. They escaped from their cages. To the citizens frightened by the wolves, it was explained: “You have absolutely nothing to worry about because they’re like dogs. If a wolf appears, a gamekeeper will come. But since it’s in a populated area, he won’t shoot it

because that would be a crime. It shouldn’t attack. It’s actually tame, just hungry.”

A private zoo? So kids can see a live wolf, since there are none left in the taiga? Or something else?!

Nothing to worry about—just tame but hungry wolves roaming the villages. Totally tame, but hungry—so maybe give them some sausage?

An example of human irresponsibility? Absolutely! And a good illustration of the issue with banning trophy hunting. I don’t know why they kept wolves at home in this case. The media didn’t publish that information. But in our country, fenced hunting is legalized. It’s being expanded and promoted as so-called “game breeding.” Something environmentalists and animal rights activists have fought against being legislated for years.

Let’s look at the whole spectrum of the phenomenon. Fenced hunting is just part of the overall process of “secondary domestication” of wild animals, so to speak.

Private zoos, where wild animals are kept in captivity. On private land or even at home. This is a recent phenomenon. At least in our country. These aren’t scientific-practical centers for rehabilitating wild animals, for example. Not places where a zoologist works with an orphaned bear cub to eventually return it

to the wild. There are few such rehabilitation centers, but they exist. And they do important and necessary work.

They employ specialists. Home zoos are something else entirely. They can be just people who “can afford” to keep a bear, a wolf. Or even a tiger—depending on what they can afford. A demonstration of personal wealth and exclusivity to others, nothing more. Or they can be small commercial enterprises where animals are exploited for profit. Circuses, dolphinariums, photographers with animals in tourist areas, various mini-zoos. There are worse options. I don’t have confirmed data, but there are constant rumors that underground dog fights still occur. And they say wild animals, including wolves, are used for this.

And “game breeding,” like a large private zoo. The term “fur farming” existed before. It’s the breeding of various animals for fur, for pelts. Sable, mink, nutria, rabbit. From the everyday necessity of clothing made from skins, fur became a luxury item, a status symbol. A demonstration: “Yes, I’m so rich I can afford to skin a living creature and wear it!” In recent years, such displays of wealth by the rich have gradually declined. Society’s attitude toward this “fur” display of “aristocracy” has become too negative!

And now “game breeding.” It’s being heavily pushed by those in power. Heavily promoted as a way to preserve nature. The story goes: wealthy hunters pay money to kill, and that money funds the preservation of this endangered species. In my opinion, this is, to put it mildly, deceitful. An attempt to whitewash the creation of a paid killing industry in the eyes of society. You can only preserve an entire ecological system, only an entire biocenosis within a large territory.

Game breeding and fenced hunting have nothing to do with this! Whether it’s 50 hectares or 500 hectares—the animal is just bred there for hunting. It’s fed, increasing the number of the species needed by the owners for paid killing later. There’s no talk of a balanced ecosystem! At the same time, infection risks are created. On one hand, people bring their infections into the ecosystem. Feed is brought in, people work there. Rats, among other things, breed—just like on a regular agricultural enterprise! On the other hand, the biosystem is much less isolated. And infections from the wild are then brought out to people. Hunters and workers bring them back to the cities. And the system of fenced farms sharply stimulates these processes compared to “classic” hunting.

GAME BREEDING IS NOT THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS, BUT THE CREATION OF CONCENTRATION CAMPS FOR ANIMALS FOR THEIR SUBSEQUENT KILLING FOR MONEY!

An exaggerated statement? What is it, if not the creation of separate territories where the species needed for hunting is concentrated?! Concentration camps for the killing of wild animals, indeed!

“Fur farming” is an agricultural sector. Mainly breeding animals for pelts.

And what is “game breeding”? Breeding wild animals to sell the right to kill them. Something wrong again? “Hunting” is tracking a wild animal for its capture. “Capture” is the politically correct term for killing a wild animal. Since in an enclosure “tracking” is either absent or minimized—it’s just plain killing. Concentration camps for the killing of wild animals, isn’t it?!

It turns out that we are now witnessing the process of secondary domestication of essentially wild animals that were never domesticated before.

If we avoid playing with words and substituting concepts, there are historical precedents for game breeding and fenced hunting. This is not a conservation effort, as some try to portray it. These are hunting

reserves for the elite, with elements of agricultural production added. The production of targets, so to speak, is put on an industrial basis. The only thing is, these targets are alive. And thinking, self-aware, if we're talking about higher predators. The next step in the moral degradation of society is obvious—hunting humans, right? Or is that something that only happens in science fiction movies and could never happen in reality?

Chapter 15. Instruments of torturous capture

A "TRAP" is a technical device for killing or capturing someone, usually referred to as "game."

Did you know that a human can be "game" (a victim) just as easily as an animal?!

Yes, indeed! The basis of ANY type of trap is the INDISCRIMINATE nature of its action!

Whoever gets caught in the steel noose, it tightens on them.

Whoever steps on it, the trap snaps shut: on a "leg" or a "paw." Believe me, the steel trap doesn't care!

This is just a preamble. A simple illustration of the basic property of a trap (or snare) — whoever touches or steps on it, gets caught.

INDISCRIMINATE ACTION.

And while an adult might be able to escape a trap, albeit with an injured limb, an animal or child cannot. Although, with a serious injury from a "wolf" or "bear"

TOOTHED trap, biting into a limb with STEEL SPIKES, even an adult is unlikely to escape…

A technical device for KILLING or capturing. Accordingly, capturing followed by killing — most often. Capturing animals for study or relocation is a rare exception. Meat, to eat. Or fur, to make clothing. These motives for capturing animals are more common. Traditional, you might say.

And "humaneness" or "non-injury" were not only NEVER INTENDED, but are also TECHNICALLY IMPOSSIBLE!

The purpose of the overwhelming majority of mechanical capture devices is precisely MAXIMUM INJURY TO THE VICTIM! UP TO THE DEATH OF THE VICTIM!

This is a fact.

This is the real practical purpose of a trap or any other snare.

And talk of "humane traps" or "non-injurious traps" is outright nonsense at its core! Once again: the very purpose of a trap is to injure the victim and subsequently kill it! These mechanical devices are designed for exactly that!

A trap or snare is a device, a technical tool, that "does the hunting for a person." A means of automating and scaling hunting. The human hunter doesn't track the prey themselves; instead, some "steel jaw" left by the person watches over the prey day and night.

Ethnographer Julius Lips believes that the appearance of the first trap had more significance for human culture than the invention of the wheel. He is probably right! For the hunter thousands of years ago, it was a breakthrough — a device that procures food on its own.

For capturing game, people have used and still use boots, traps, gates, snares, clamps, cages, hooks, baskets, mousetraps, and many, many more. There are countless names for the various devices invented by people to catch game! And there are also devices for catching birds, fish, or crayfish.

Since the 16th century, steel traps have appeared in Europe, gradually replacing all other types of traps. Except for snares, probably. The rope snare is replaced by a wire snare. And later, by a steel cable snare.

The steel snare and steel trap are the most "lethal" and effective tools of "passive remote hunting" in the modern world. If a trap is quite expensive, a snare is practically free. Teenagers or not-so-wealthy provincial residents

can easily set snares for various animals. The design of a slipknot is simple, and wire is accessible.

And here we come to an important question: hunting, including with various types of traps, is now often interpreted as "sport," as "sport hunting."

And a huge ethical question arises:

What kind of "sport" is this that involves maiming living creatures?!

Can we consider blatant cruelty as "sport"?!

And more and more, both society and state authorities are coming to the conclusion that such cruel entertainments are no longer acceptable in the modern world. It should be noted that traps are already partially banned in our country. And completely banned in many other countries around the world.

The time for change has come!

Yes, once various traps were part of the development of human civilization. That was millennia ago, and now that time is finally ending! People no longer need to hunt for food or to skin animals for clothing. All of that is in the past!

And cruelty as "entertainment" or "sport" is something we definitely don't need to drag into the future! The only traps that should remain are those used by zoologists for capturing, studying, or relocating animals. Just like "tranquilizer darts." But traps, snares, and other instruments of torturous capture need to be left in the past!

Chapter 16. The trap and the snare

Not everyone knows or understands what traps and snares for catching wild animals really are.

In fact, both hunters and hunting lobbyists in legislative bodies all "modestly keep quiet" about what these things actually are.

They vote on laws about snare trapping without understanding what these traps entail. How many lawmakers have set snares or traps themselves? How many have personally removed a victim from a crippling iron trap?! None! It's 100% certain that very few legislators EVEN REALIZE WHAT THIS IS!

And what portion of the population has even seen a real "toothed" trap for a large predator? Let alone found a paw in the taiga in a snare or trap that an animal chewed off to escape?! I’m 100% sure there are only a handful of such people! Not even a fraction of a percent, just a handful!

Hunters and hunting lobbyists won't explain what snares or traps are. Even more so—they will never SHOW what they are. The reason is simple! If even for a few people, or for other lawmakers, "trap" or "snare" stops being just words—no one will legalize such brutal mechanisms!

So let's at least for ourselves figure out what a snare or trap is. How wild animals are caught with these mechanical traps. Let's at least understand it theoretically! I receive letters or see posts on social media indicating that even many of my readers don't understand what these traps are IN PRACTICE!

THE TRAP.

A trap is a mechanical device for catching animals that grabs the animal by the paw. Less often—by the neck. Traps are usually metal. They consist of a powerful spring and jaws (clamps) that actually capture the animal. A key feature of a trap is the impossibility of prying open the jaws of a triggered device by applying force directly to them. The opening is blocked.

Otherwise, a large animal, like a bear or even a fox, could easily free itself. To release the victim and reset the trap, you need to engage a separate triggering mechanism. Often, especially with traps for large

animals, even with a special lever. The spring is so powerful that it can't be done by hand. A metal cable or chain is used to keep the trap with the captured animal in place.

Chewing off its own paw is the only option left for the trapped animal!

And yes, the jaws of traps for large animals are "toothed"! They are equipped with sharp spikes that pierce the paw of a wolf or bear completely. Essentially, the clamping force of any trap's jaws, even if not "toothed," leads to skin laceration. It damages tendons. Dislocates joints. Breaks bones. And even tears off limbs as the animal tries to free itself! The captured animal dies within a few days from the injuries and pain. In cold weather, additionally, from frostbite.

Even an animal rescued from a trap will likely remain crippled for life. It can't survive in the wild. Such animals, saved from hunters' traps, sometimes live only in captivity, in rare wildlife rescue centers.

An animal that chews off its own limb still dies very quickly. It just doesn't become the hunter's prey, managing to escape. Only to then die from blood loss or infection.

In many countries, the law ALREADY either completely bans the setting of traps or at least (!) requires trap owners to check them every 24 hours. Precisely because traps are a type of openly "brutal" trap, maiming and tormenting the victim. Yet the objective situation is that in many major countries, the use of traps is STILL allowed, despite EVER-INCREASING public protests. For example, traps are still allowed in Russia, Canada, Ukraine, and the USA.

THE SNARE.

With snares for catching animals, it's all quite simple: they're just ordinary slipknots, nooses. For birds, they're made simply from cord or rope. For animals—from steel wire or cable. So that the victim can't chew through the snare.

Most often, they just set nooses. But experienced hunters make more sophisticated nooses with a reverse lock. That is, the snare-noose can tighten. But once tightened, it can't loosen. It can't slightly slacken. Such complex snares are also produced industrially. In some countries, only they can be used, but primitive nooses cannot.

The argument is that the victim dies faster this way. Suffers less. Although hunters themselves say this isn't true. In reality, the reverse lock is needed so the animal can't loosen the snare and free its paw. There are stories of bears or large cats doing this. Which isn't surprising, considering recent scientific data on animal intelligence!

So, a snare is simpler than a trap. It doesn't work with a spring, but with the jerk of the captured victim. And the animal tightens the snare itself, with its own jerk. Sometimes around the neck, strangling itself. But more often, just on the paw.

The result is the same—a painful, slow death for a maimed living creature!

Snares are cheaper than traps. Just orders of magnitude cheaper! A few meters of cable or wire costs as much as one trap. And you can make several dozen snares.

In a day, you can set many more snares than traps.

Snares are much easier to camouflage than traps.

With snares, you can completely block a watering hole or trail so that the animal simply has nowhere to go. Something that's practically impossible with traps.

Because of these features, the snare has always been considered a "poacher's" tool.

Right now, snare trapping is being aggressively promoted, justified by the supposed necessity due to wolves. They say the wolf population has exploded to the point where snares are the only way to manage them.

The main argument against snares is their lack of selectivity. There are precise statistics from many countries on this: anything can get caught in a snare! For example, a rabbit trap is completely safe for a bear. But a noose made of steel cable lacks such selectivity! It doesn't matter what the snare was set for—anything can get caught in it. Essentially, you can't set a 'wolf snare'! You can only set a snare. And then, whatever gets caught: maybe a wolf, maybe a lynx! Or maybe something else!

So, a snare will always remain a 'poacher's' and 'cruel' tool! Simply because of its technical characteristics. It's just the nature of this type of mechanical device. There's nothing you can do about it!

Another particularly unpleasant feature of snare trapping is that snares are often forgotten. This happens much less frequently with traps. But snares are set fifty or more at a time in a day. When a poacher does this with the most primitive snares, as you can imagine, no one bothers to remove them later! An animal can get caught in such a snare even a year or two later. Until

the snare rusts to complete uselessness, it remains dangerous!

Chapter 17. "The Spanish Boot" for the Younger Brother

Torture is the deliberate infliction of physical or moral suffering, usually to coerce actions against a person's will.

One could say that torture is the intentional infliction of severe pain or suffering on a person for ANY reason.

But what about inflicting pain on NON-humans? Where are we, as humans, ready to "draw the lines of humanity"?

Of course, we must add: where are we drawing the lines of humanity and compassion RIGHT NOW?!

After all, the issue is also that torture against humans was banned ONLY RECENTLY!!!

Acts of torture committed during wars were considered war crimes and were only prohibited starting in 1949 by the Geneva Conventions!

The main international act in the fight against torture became the "Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment."

It was adopted by a United Nations General Assembly Resolution only on December 10, 1984!

Only 127 countries have joined the Convention against Torture. Let me remind you: Currently, the United Nations consists of 193 member states and 2 observer states.

As of 2022:

— 38 years since the international Convention against Torture has existed;

— 68 states (out of the 195 recognized by the UN) have still NOT joined the Convention against Torture.

Yes, the 1984 Convention established so-called universal jurisdiction regarding torture. This means that those guilty of torture can be prosecuted by the authorities of any state, regardless of the perpetrators' citizenship and the location of their actions. But the fact remains: 68 states have not formally joined the Convention!

The history of humanization for humanity, as you can see, is short!

Torture has been practiced since ancient times. It was only in the 18th and 19th centuries that Western countries ("civilized Western countries") abolished the official use of torture in the judicial system. But torture against people continued to be used worldwide.

The Middle Ages became a legendary time in history for the torture of people, making one's blood run cold. At that time, in "civilized Europe," a torture method known as the "Spanish boot" was very popular. The name is conventional. It became established in the Russian language. This torture was used not only in Spain but also in Germany, England, France, and in Russia.

The device consisted of a pair of wooden boards. With technological advancements, metal plates were used, completely replacing the wooden prototypes of the past. Progress in war and torture always moved quickly! A person's leg was inserted between the plates. The device worked like a vise. Under the action of tightening screws or driving in wedges, the boards or steel plates would move toward each other. The bones of the limbs would be crushed and broken under their force. It's terrifying to even think about the bloody pulp the victim's limbs would become!

Oh, yes! By historical standards, such devices were perfected at a rapid pace! For example, the "Nuremberg toe crusher" was a more advanced tool that could be placed on both feet at once, simultaneously exerting its crushing pressure on all ten toes. If the victim was particularly stubborn, the press could be tightened until the plates touched, thus grinding the foot bones literally into powder.

The analogy is simple. It's not hard to guess: how far have animal traps evolved from the "Spanish boot" for humans?

How far is the sadistic poacher, breaking a wild animal's legs with steel traps, from the medieval sadistic inquisitor in moral and ethical terms?

Does anyone perhaps think that it's necessary to preserve not only "ancient hunting traditions" in the modern world but also "ancient justice traditions" using the "Spanish boot" and other tortures?!

This is important. It's important for as many people as possible to know and understand. Culture and civilization change. The history of humanism and humanity is not very long! We, as a large community of people, are still moving toward achieving this TRUE humanity.

And we cannot stop on the path to achieving humanity!

Moreover, we must not allow returns to the past!

Not to the "time-honored traditions of justice" with the "Spanish boot," nor to the "time-honored traditions of hunting" with steel traps!

Chapter 18. Sanctity instead of stoning

In February 2022, a study was published with a public initiative to preserve wolves in India. In the remote Himalayan mountains, scientists united to stand against the inhumane slaughter of wolves! The work involved specialists from various countries, including the Mysore Nature Conservation Foundation (India); the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Bristol (UK); the Interdisciplinary Center for Conservation Science at the University of Oxford (UK); the Snow Leopard Trust in Seattle (USA); and the Interdisciplinary Institute in Berlin (Germany).

Why did scientists from different corners of the world gather in the distant Himalayan mountains?

The reason is that wolves there are on the brink of complete extinction. Even in these complex mountain systems, people have managed to decimate them! And they do it using methods of prehistoric torture.

It's all about traditional pits called “Shandong” (locally known as Shanku). Herdsmen in the Trans-Himalayan and Tibetan regions use these pits to trap wolves! A large, wide funnel-shaped pit is made near villages or pastures. A domestic animal, usually a sheep or goat, is thrown into the pit to attract wolves. The animal cries out pitifully, and people wait patiently.

When the hungry wolves arrive, they fall into the trap, landing in the pit. The locals grab huge stones and start stoning the wolves to death! One such pit serves as a tool for exterminating wolves for many years.

Experts say that wolves in Tibet are in dire straits—they have been almost wiped out. The few remaining wolves inevitably come to the Shandong pits at the cries of a sheep or goat, fall into the trap, and await their grim fate: heavy stones on their gray heads.

These are truly horrific tortures for the animal. Naturally, the domestic animal also usually ends up under the stones!

Scientists conducted research in the Leh and Ladakh regions, interviewed residents of 64 local villages, and surveyed over 25,000 square kilometers of terrain in search of “wolf pits.” They typically asked people for the coordinates of Shandong and when wolves were last

killed there! To ensure the information was as accurate as possible, scientists approached village elders or those in charge of herding.

However, since there are hardly any wolves left and killing them is punishable by law, locals were afraid to disclose information about the “wolf pits.” Specialists had to find a personal approach to each informant, assuring them that they did not intend to pursue or create any difficulties. Only when the villagers were convinced that they were dealing with genuine scientists did they agree to show the Shandong wolf pits.

The specialists visited the pits and recorded their GPS coordinates to create a map. They also checked the pits for active and abandoned ones. As a result, they discovered 94 Shandong, with one village having as many as five such pits! This is catastrophically high, considering that there are hardly any wolves left.

Of the pits discovered, about 34 had not been used for several years.

Scientists spoke with the villagers and explained the tragic situation with the wolves! They proposed eliminating the “wolf pits” and building Stupas—Buddhist religious structures—in their place. Stupas are typically mound-like hemispherical

structures for storing various relics: idols, texts, or monks' remains. They are often used for meditation as they symbolize the five purified elements (water, air, earth, fire, and wisdom).

The scientists managed to find common ground with almost all the villages! When the locals were offered not just to stop killing wolves but to replace Shandong with a sanctuary, it had an extremely positive effect on them. Moreover, the killing of wolves began to evoke empathy and deep respect for the animal.

The specialists, based on the results of the study, say:

> “Our conservation initiative is based on the connections between culture, ecology, and conservation and strengthens them <…> this initiative to neutralize Shandong and secure community commitment to conservation has the potential for replication and significant improvement of the status of wolves in Ladakh and other parts of the Tibetan Plateau that share a similar culture.”

Such an interesting practice. Scientific, yet with an extremely unusual approach for scientists! They used cultural values and religion to dissuade locals from killing wolves using torturous methods.

Chapter 19. Red wolves

This remarkable creature, the red wolf, is nearly wiped out worldwide! It is now on the brink of complete extinction. When discussing the situation of wolves globally, one cannot overlook the population of Cuon alpinus—the red wolves, once known as Himalayan wolves.

Red wolves are unusual because they exhibit traits of several animals at once: wolves, foxes, and jackals. They are far from the typical gray wolf, yet they are just as crucial in many ecosystems, playing vital roles in biogeocenoses.

You can undoubtedly distinguish a red wolf from a gray one by its color, very fluffy fur, and long, elegant tail. Its face resembles a fox's—long, elongated, almost pointed! Large, erect ears help capture sounds around with the utmost precision!

There are about ten subspecies of the red wolf, and at one time, the red wolf inhabited Russia. We had two subspecies. Its habitat was precisely the refuges of

wildlife: from our ancient Altai to the Tian Shan mountains, with some populations reaching Indochina and Malaysia.

The majority of populations always lived in the dense forests of the rugged mountains of Central and South Asia. But even from there, humans managed to "reach" the red wolf and nearly eradicate it completely.

In Russia, the red wolf was the first to be wiped out!

"Oh, what a pelt! Like a fox, but not a fox! Like a wolf, but not a wolf!" hunters would say as they slaughtered the red wolf en masse.

In our country and in Central Asia (which was also part of the USSR at one time), all red wolf populations were exterminated by the 1970s. In other countries where they can still somehow exist, wolves live only in specially protected areas and are listed as "on the brink of extinction."

In size, the red wolf is smaller than the gray wolf, but there were species in Europe (in Western and Central) during the Pleistocene (Ice Age) that differed from the modern species by their large size.

Until the late 1950s, the red wolf liked to inhabit the southern Far East, and our grandfathers could well have encountered it in the wild. As well as in other regions of

the country.

I can call the red wolf a mountain wolf, and I wouldn't be wrong. All the scientific data and historical records I've studied indicate that red wolf populations lived precisely in rugged mountains. Moreover, evidence suggests that the wolf never settled in open landscapes, although during long migrations in search of prey, it sometimes passed through unfamiliar places like forest-steppes and steppes.

And yes, a very important point is that it is indeed a wolf and lives in packs of 5–12 individuals as a rule. The largest packs recorded were up to 30 individuals.

Currently, the red wolf is listed as an endangered species by the IUCN (Red List). In Russia, its status is "practically extinct," although there are no real data on sightings of the red wolf in the country over the past 50 years.

Interestingly, besides human extermination, the decline of the red wolf population is also due to the reduction of its food base because of the decrease in the number of ungulates. Which, again, are being exterminated by humans.

Today, according to available information, approximately two thousand red wolves remain worldwide. According to the IUCN Red List in 2015, the population was between 1,000 and 2,200 individuals.

There is another type of red wolf that lives in the southeastern United States. Canis rufus is generally a subspecies of the gray wolf and is often classified as a genetic mix of wolf and coyote. It differs greatly from Cuon alpinus (the red mountain wolf), and it hardly has any red hues.

But it needs to be mentioned. The red wolf from the USA is also in the red book and has been officially listed as an endangered species since 1996. It looks very similar to the gray wolf but is smaller in size! The coloration is different. It originally inhabited the entire southeastern part of the USA up to the Gulf of Mexico, and according to scientists, it was one of the most important key predators in the wild.

Unlike the mountain red wolf, Canis rufus inhabits coastal plains, taking refuge from humans in agricultural fields, as the wolf's natural habitat has long been lost. Historically, it lived in river forests and swamps, hunting small game while protecting its wetlands.

But like all other wolves, Canis rufus is subject to total extermination! Even in the 1940s, they were massively "wiped out" from Texas, and there was a biologist named Stanley Young who reported the impossibility of exterminating all the red wolves!

"Why?" people would ask him.

"Because red wolves are cunning and hide in the thickets," the biologist would reply.

That's the kind of biologists they were. In eastern Texas in 1939, over 800 red wolves were caught and killed. When the authorities realized that there were no more wolves and that they were on the brink of extinction in the USA, the first attempts to restore populations began to appear.

Since 1987, authorities have released several wolves in North Carolina, including on lands used for mass bombings by the US Air Force and private farms. Consequently, many wolves were destroyed by "military tests" and poisons scattered by farmers who fiercely hated wolves.

Since 1921, red wolves were partially released in eastern Tennessee, where there is a national park called Great Smoky Mountains. However, biologists once again miscalculated the location for releasing the wolves and

did not consider competition with coyote populations in these lands. As a result, the red wolves almost completely perished, and the remnants were evacuated from the park in 1998 to the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge.

Some individuals were released for experimental purposes in other states. The further fate of the red wolves is unknown.

As for their numbers, as of 2007, data indicated that there were no more than 300 red wolves left in the United States, with 207 of them living in captivity. This means there were fewer than 100 truly wild wolves.

But as the years passed, wolves perished, and by 2020, experts estimated the population had dwindled to 19, with 7 wolves fitted with radio collars for tracking in the wild.

I studied numerous data on the reasons for such a sharp decline of red wolves in the U.S., and all available information points to deaths from shooting and poisoning by landowner-farmers. In other words, people, driven by malice and greed, simply wiped out the last red wolves in the U.S.!

The story then continues with millions of dollars being allocated for population restoration, involving various organizations and activists. Wolves were reintroduced into the wild in some areas, including breeding pups in captivity. By 2023, about 17 red wolves were living in the Alligator River refuge.

If you combine all possible data, both confirmed and not, by 2023 there are only about 270 red wolves in the world, almost all of which live in captivity. They are kept in zoos to make money from tourists viewing these endangered wolves.

I cannot help but mention the beautiful, flourishing land of North America before European colonization. The red wolf held a very important place in the wild prairies. The indigenous peoples of the North American continent, the Native Americans, revered red wolves and did not kill them. It was considered a crime.

But then the colonizers arrived, slaughtered all the Native Americans, and along with them, the red wolves and all other wild animals.

In studying red wolves, I also noted recent work by U.S. scientists who specifically researched the impact of the species Canis rufus on ecosystems.

As you already know, the largest population of a few individuals resides in the Alligator River National Park under the close watch of specialists. In February 2024, initial data from scientists at North Carolina State University showed a correlation between the decline in red wolf numbers and the increase in other animals they prey on. As red wolves began to die off rapidly, ecosystem shifts and imbalances occurred. Scientists stated that even the small wolf population currently living in Alligator River Park has a real impact on the surrounding ecosystems.

I will quote Alex Murray, the author of the study from North Carolina State University:

> "You kind of expect them to have an impact on other species in the area, but I think our study really showed that, and it really showed that the absence of this apex predator in the ecosystem can have many ecological consequences."

Scientists used 25 camera traps to capture changes in ecosystems from 2015 to 2021, after which the entire data set was carefully studied by specialists to assess wildlife.

In the presented study, scientists found that from 2018 to 2021, the number of wild animals began to grow rapidly after the death of red wolves. For example, cameras recorded raccoons increasing from 5 individuals to nearly 20 over 100 days of observation. Opossums were recorded increasing from 5 to more than 30 individuals. Meanwhile, there was an increase in conflicts between predators over food, with changes observed in bobcats and bears.

In other words, scientists recorded sharp changes in ecosystems that destabilize the stable biogeocenoses of wildlife. The destruction of a crucial animal species leads to a disruption of balance, provoking the rapid degradation of ecosystems.

Scientists say that by reintroducing red wolves into the wild, ecosystems gradually begin to recover.

You might ask: what's wrong with having more animals?

It's all about the balance of ecological systems. Take the wildlife of North Carolina, for example: after the extermination of red wolves, raccoons and opossums began to breed massively, eating bird eggs. This led to a sharp decline in the population of white quails, which simply cannot reproduce fast enough.

The death of quails leads to the death of other animal species that depend on them. Thus, all local ecosystems begin to degrade, and balance is disrupted.

These are simple, I would even say BASIC understandings of the complexity of any biological systems that everyone should know. Any biogeocenosis is a single interconnected system where the balance between plant and animal life has been formed over millennia! In nature, there is exactly as much as there should be. Any interference leads to the degradation and death of the entire system.

And people, by exterminating what they consider "unnecessary" species, are simply committing a crime against living nature, provoking the slow chronic degradation of the most complex biogeocenoses.

Unfortunately, the extermination of the red wolf carries far greater ecological consequences than just the extinction of a single species. These consequences unfold in a chronic long-term perspective!

Chapter 20. The Tasmanian Thylacine

I want to tell you about the Tasmanian wolf, also known as the thylacine! This wolf mainly inhabited Australia and, like many native animals, was a marsupial. Unfortunately, in 1930, the last Tasmanian wolf was wiped out by humans! People simply wiped these amazing, almost fairy-tale creatures off the face of the Earth.

Populations of this wolf lived throughout Australia and also spread to the islands of New Guinea and Tasmania. Hence the name "Tasmanian," as it was there that the last wolves died in captivity!

We will never see thylacines again, even though they are as remarkable as kangaroos or platypuses in Australia. They looked like a dog, but with a kangaroo's tail and a pouch on their belly. They also had an unusual striped coat: their features resembled both a wolf and a tiger.

Scientists now debate the specific reasons for the thylacine's extinction, but they agree on one thing: humans are to blame. For instance, people introduced dingoes to the mainland, which spread throughout Australia and "pushed" thylacines out of their natural habitat. As a result, the wolves remained only in Tasmania (note: Tasmania is an Australian state located on a separate island 240 km from Australia), but later European colonizers exterminated them there too.

In Tasmania, the thylacine lived quite freely. The population was stable! Then European colonizers arrived and began to exterminate the wolves, accusing them of attacking sheep. Hunters and farmers formed alliances to jointly kill the wolves as quickly as possible! By 1863, thylacines were left only in inaccessible mountainous areas, where the last individuals hid from people.

In the early 1900s, people brought dogs with "canine distemper" to Tasmania, which spread across the island. Thylacines were extremely susceptible to it, and when the plague ended in 1914, only a few wolves remained.

In those years, people gathered, scratched their thick heads, and passed a law to protect Tasmania's wildlife. But they refused to include thylacines on the list of protected species! On the contrary, a hunt was declared

on the last individuals, with authorities paying huge bounties for each wolf killed, and within a few years, hunters wiped out the population completely.

The very last wild wolf was killed on May 13, 1930. Another was kept in captivity to make money from people who wanted to see the "last thylacine" with their own eyes! People were literally told that this creature was like a dinosaur—you wouldn't see them anywhere else. And people gladly paid to view the animal exterminated by Europeans.

In 1936, the wolf died of old age. From the time Europeans colonized Tasmania to the complete extinction of the wolves, only 133 years passed! People managed to completely destroy the species.

And you know what's the most terrifying? After this, in 1938, the authorities officially banned the killing of marsupial wolves. Which no longer existed in nature, as they had been exterminated by humans!

And now to the dumbest thing, for which wolves worldwide are still blamed, justifying their extermination: in 2011, scientists studied the jaws of thylacines and proved that marsupial wolves COULD NOT HUNT SHEEP, and this reason was simply used by hunters to justify killing thylacines. Scientists say that

sheep were indeed slaughtered, but not by thylacines—by feral dogs spread by humans.

Some specialists, lobbying for the hunting lobby in power, diligently claimed that thylacines were genetically weak against infectious diseases and that this was the main reason for their extinction! To which reasonable scientists counter: for hundreds of thousands of years, the marsupial wolf lived in Tasmania and did not go extinct, but as soon as humans arrived, within just one century, the population was wiped out completely.

In the ecosystems of Tasmania and Australia, the thylacine was a top predator, like gray wolves in the Russian forests. It was at the top of the food chain, hunting prey smaller than itself! That's why, as hunters accused, the thylacine couldn't physically hunt sheep. Its size didn't allow it, and its jaw wasn't suitable for dragging prey. This is what scientists reported.

As I constantly tell my readers, it's important to understand that the loss of one species means a cascading extinction of others. Disruptions in the unified biological system of the wild! Like the Red Wolf, the thylacine was part of the traditions of Australia's indigenous peoples. They passed down knowledge of the

wolves from generation to generation, depicting them in rock art that is still preserved.

After exterminating the thylacines, Australians even depicted it on the Tasmanian coat of arms! And do you know why? It immediately absolves Europeans who colonized Australia of all blame: after all, they mourn the animal's demise. And children aren't responsible for their parents' actions.

Meanwhile, right now in Australia, authorities literally conduct annual "cleanups" of nature from various animal species, including invasive species introduced to the mainland by Europeans. They can't stop ecological degradation! Ecosystems are dying right now, rapidly, and this is CASCADING DEGRADATION OF BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS due to the introduction of invasive species and the extermination of key wild animal species.

By the way, here's an interesting fact: the last time the Tasmanian wolf shared a common ancestor with dogs and wolves was about 160 million years ago. It had far more in common with marsupials, which is why, thanks to "convergent evolution," the wolf was so unusual! The pups were born in a pouch on the belly with strong front legs (like any other marsupial), which allowed the pup to

climb into its mother's pouch.

After that, the pup would grow and, about 12 weeks later, leave its mother's pouch, by which time it already resembled a dog or wolf.

To understand, in Australia, many animal species are marsupials. For example, kangaroos, koalas, or Tasmanian devils.

Chapter 21. The Norwegian-Swedish wolf

Let's move to Norway now and discuss the Scandinavian wolf. I'll start by saying that the true Scandinavian wolf no longer exists: humans have wiped them out. This includes wolves from both Norway and Sweden. The largest genetic study of wolves in the world was conducted by scientists. The lead of the research group was Hans Stenøien, director of the University Museum at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Scientists have reported that there is no longer any doubt that humans have exterminated all true Scandinavian wolves! The last individuals were wiped out around the 1970s.

The study was initiated by the Norwegian Parliament in 2016. The head of the study reports that true Norwegian-Swedish wolves might still be found in zoos around the world, but the wolves currently living in Norway and Sweden are not their relatives.

The first wolves appeared in Norway about 12,000 years ago, when the eternal ice was retreating. Wolves lived side by side with the Vikings and had no problems! Wolves would hunt in the mountains, while Vikings would sail off on their longships to raid England.

But just as there are no more Vikings, there are no more Scandinavian wolves. By the 1970s, they were completely exterminated by humans, who zealously blamed wolves for threatening agriculture! Authorities issued bounties for killing wolves, and hunters actively engaged in the slaughter.

Afterward, other wolves took the place of the Scandinavian wolves. Around the 1980s, specialists reported that new wolves had appeared in the border area of Norway and Sweden, high in the mountains. This population is shared by both countries.

Professor Hans Stenøien says that these wolves most likely migrated from Finland, expanding their territory. These wolves are different from the true Scandinavian ones; they have different genetics! Finnish wolves are smaller in size and show a high mix of genes from other regions.

There's another problem. The genetic study of these wolves showed that they have undergone inbreeding — meaning they came from a very small group of wolves, resulting in close genetic ties. This is bad because they develop genetic defects that are passed down from generation to generation! The wolves are genetically weak and very vulnerable to diseases and hereditary conditions.

Therefore, according to scientists, there is a huge risk that these wolves will also soon become completely extinct.

From a biological standpoint, nature tried to protect itself! Wolves are part of the immune system: when one species disappeared, another came in to maintain the ecosystem's sanitary functions! But even nature can't keep up with humans, as we destroy all living things around us so rapidly.

Scientists conducted thorough genetic studies of the true Scandinavian wolves, which humans have already exterminated. They also tried to determine if there were dog genes in the Norwegian-Swedish wolf population! Genes from 56 dog breeds were used, and scientists confirmed that Scandinavian wolves were true PUREBREDS, with the lowest amount of dog genes in

the world.

Today, theoretically, Norwegian-Swedish wolves might still be found in zoos somewhere in the world. If so, it could help stop inbreeding and restore the health of the new wolf population currently living on the Sweden-Norway border.

But who will do it? Search, identify, stop extinction. It requires enormous effort and money! And right now, there's a fierce war in Norway between society and the authorities over whether to kill the last wolves living in the mountains at all.

The fact is, the total wolf population in Sweden and Norway does not exceed 400 individuals. Many live in Sweden, with far fewer in Norway. But they constantly move and live in mountainous, hard-to-reach areas, partly due to human pressure.

It's worth noting that there's a very strong public initiative in Norway to protect wolves. People have taken to the streets, demanding the government stop the extermination of wolves.

In February 2021, Norway reported that the country had about 12 packs or around 100 wolves. This is critically low for a vast mountain ecosystem! And they issued a permit to kill 9 out of 100 wolves that dared to settle in

remote corners of the country. The task was to track the wolves in the forests and fjords north of Oslo. Track and shoot!

Wolves were allowed to be killed from helicopters, and the names of the hunters were strictly classified to avoid a harsh public backlash. Authorities said the wolves had left the designated territory for living. Initially, the number was set at 20 wolves for culling, but under pressure from environmentalists, it was reduced to 9 individuals. The authorities were doggedly insisting that even more wolves needed to be killed.

Wolves were accused of allegedly killing 600 sheep. The same happens here, with the first cases appearing back in the USSR. Losses in herds and flocks are often blamed on wolves! Blaming wolves for stolen, dead, and self-slaughtered animals. This way, compensation is often obtained from the authorities, and funds are laundered from the sale of animals for meat.

It's very simple: you cut 10% of the animals from the herd for the season, slaughter them, and sell them for meat! Then you blame it all on wolves and get compensation. It's impossible to verify this! And no one will. So wolves have been made the "scapegoats."

Let's return to Norway. The government issued licenses to kill wolves. Environmentalists raised an outcry and demanded the government stop! Sweden joined the protest, as they also monitor the population of these same wolves.

In Europe, all wolf populations are on the brink of complete extinction. The rare packs that remain are already significantly altered, and the population structures are disrupted. The numbers reported by the authorities cannot be trusted at all.

Suppose Norway openly states that about 100 wolves live in the country. Meanwhile, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) reported that the actual number does not exceed 51–80 individuals. Whereas for normal population reproduction, at least 500 wolves are necessary! No less.

These same wolves, which are “counted” in Norway, cross the border into Sweden and are included in that country's statistics. So they are counting the same wolves. In Norway, wolf hunting is relentless! And in June 2020, the Norwegian parliament approved a purely lobbyist amendment that critically weakened wolf protection.

Incidentally, the World Wildlife Fund has been actively trying to protect the wolves. Real scientists, the best specialists from around the world.

“This is pure mass slaughter... We haven't seen anything like this in almost 100 years, when the policy was to exterminate all large predators,” said Nina Jensen, head of the Norwegian branch of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

Norwegian officials counter: “Wolves exceed the national target population.” They repeat this every time people demand an end to the extermination of these wildlife custodians.

WWF even sued the Norwegian government when 28 wolves were killed in 2017–2018. The environmentalists lost in the district court but won in the appellate court. The court concluded that the justifications for shooting wolf packs were indeed foolish and purely for personal interests!

Afterward, the animal protection organization NOAH similarly sued the government because the authorities killed a wolf pair and their two-year-old pups. The wolf family was killed in a designated wolf habitat! These are the areas where wolves are allowed to live, but if they step outside the boundaries, they are immediately shot.

That's the situation with wolves in Norway. It's the real situation that needs to be understood. It's worth noting that Norway has a very strong wolf protection society. It's a civil society. The authorities, the wealthy, and all sorts of businessmen are not part of it. We don't have anything like that in Russia yet! The fact is, they've already reduced the wolf population to the LAST FEW INDIVIDUALS. In our country, similar movements to protect wolves will inevitably emerge, apparently when only a few remain.

As of today, fewer than 100 wolves remain in Norway. But even this is uncertain, as independent international organizations report only a few dozen of these wildlife custodians.

Chapter 22. The Danish Wolf

In Denmark, hunters completely exterminated wolves 200 years ago. Only after that was a law introduced banning the killing of wolves! Unfortunately, as with the Tasmanian wolf, the ban was enacted only after nature had been fully "cleansed" of these wild nature's custodians.

But in 2017, news spread across Denmark: experts confirmed that several wolves were discovered in the country for the first time in 200 years. It was reported that there were at least five wolves, including one female! According to specialists who studied the DNA, the wolves came to Denmark from Germany and settled in the country's agricultural region.

Peter Sunde, a scientist from Aarhus University, estimated that the wolves must have traveled about 500 kilometers to reach Denmark. Specialists suggest that the wolves are likely very young, rejected by their pack, and came to Denmark in search of new territories to live.

Evidence of the wolves' presence was established through paw prints and video surveillance. However, scientists refused to disclose the wolves' location, stating that hunters would inevitably (despite the ban) shoot these wolves. And hardly anyone would stop them from doing so!

“We are monitoring this. The wolf is an animal we are prohibited from hunting, so we must protect it,” said Henrik Hagen Olesen, a representative of the Danish Environmental Protection Agency.

A similar situation with wolves is observed in Greenland — the land of eternal ice. Greenland is part of the Danish kingdom but lies across the ocean from Denmark.

Once, real wild wolves also inhabited this place! Although Greenlandic wolves are considered a subspecies of the gray wolf, their color ranges from white to pale gray. They are very similar to Arctic wolves.

As in other countries, the Greenlandic wolf has always been subject to extermination by humans. They were brutally destroyed for any contrived reason, and only in 1988 did the authorities officially place the wolves under federal protection. Almost all the wolves (about 90%)

were pushed into a separate national park. The total number of wolves there was about 55, but in 1997 the population sharply declined due to a lack of food. They simply had nothing to hunt.

From then until 2018, the population gradually recovered. I couldn't find reliable figures, but authorities claim that the wolves have indeed partially restored their population!

Meanwhile, there is data from scientists studying the genetics of these wolves: it turns out that the remaining wolves are closely related with many genetic abnormalities. As with the Scandinavian wolves, they face extinction in the coming years!

Chapter 23. The Iberian Wolf

I've only told you about some types of wolves in certain regions of the world to give you an understanding of the overall situation. We see the fiercest conflicts when farmers and officials start battling with society! Some demand the complete extermination of wolves, while others try to protect these wild nature's custodians.

But if you look at the global situation with wolves as described in the previous chapters, you'll see how truly terrifying it is! The overall picture is that people are trying to protect the last remnants of wolf populations, while others are trying to wipe them out. We're talking about a handful of wolf packs, the last wolves on the planet!

The vast country of Norway, with its rugged terrain and mountainous landscapes, is a perfect habitat for wild animals. This area is isolated from people! Yet even from there, wolves are managed to be found and destroyed! A few dozen of the LAST wolves that came from Finland. The true Norwegian wolf has long been extinct.

Denmark, Greenland, Australia, North America, Russia. You can look at Asian countries where wolves were similarly exterminated. You could talk about African countries. Mention the numbers from South American countries!

But everywhere it's the same, completely identical: the extermination of wolves is happening rapidly, on a mind-boggling scale. The most vulnerable populations have already been wiped out. Essentially, only subspecies of the gray wolf remain—one of the most resilient and adaptable in the world.

Let's say. Another extinct wolf, officially reported in 2023.

In the province of Andalusia in Spain, authorities declared the unique Iberian wolf completely extinct. To give you an idea, these wolves were first exterminated, then in 1986 were listed as a protected species, and up until today, they were all wiped out.

Authorities now make excuses, saying "they were already dying out anyway." As if they weren't to blame at all! Even though in 2010, it was reliably known that about 50 wolves lived in six to eight packs. Now they're gone! Scientists and experts scoured all the local mountains, looking for wolf tracks, their habitats... but

found nothing.

The Iberian wolf is a subspecies of the common wolf, but with its own unique features. Wolves lived in small packs and, according to scientists, were indispensable in ecosystems. It was the Iberian wolves that maintained the stability of wild boar populations, on which the populations of endangered capercaillies depended. Local ecosystems were shaped by these key predators, which are now gone.

Southern Spain is left without wolves.

Until 1900, the Iberian wolf inhabited most of the Iberian Peninsula. The Francoist government (Spain) declared a "blood feud" against wolves simply for being wolves. In the 1950s and 1960s, wolves were exterminated throughout Spain, leaving only a few individuals. The same happened in Portugal, where wolves were also critically "reduced," with only rare packs surviving.

Now, there are no Iberian wolves left in Spanish Andalusia. Authorities explain their extinction by saying there were no timely plans to save the wolves, illegal hunting thrived, and there was, they say, a low population.

Chapter 24. Why is Europe declaring war on wolves?

At the end of 2023, the European Commission announced plans to change the protection status of wolves and begin a mass culling of these wildlife custodians. They claim the reason is the threat to livestock!

The head of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, stated, let me quote verbatim:

“The concentration of wolf packs in certain European regions has become a real danger, especially to livestock.”

Why is the head of the European Commission so eager for “wolf blood”? Wolves in the EU were nearly wiped out before, and their populations have only just been restored. And now, at this crucial moment, Grandma Ursula von der Leyen is launching a large-scale lobbying campaign to exterminate wolves.

Do they really threaten the EU countries? Are they destroying all the livestock? Is this such a terrible threat that it requires an urgent “cleansing” of wildlife from wolves?

As always, no!

The fact is, in September 2023, von der Leyen lost her beloved pony named Dolly. It was an old horse that lived on the family’s country estate in northern Germany.

According to her, a “vicious, terrifying wolf” snuck into the enclosure, killed the unfortunate pony, and escaped. If this is true, I feel sorry for the poor wolf: because if a wolf is trying to find food alone, it means hunters have already killed its pack. This indicates problems in the ecological systems!

What happened after the “great devouring of pony Dolly”? The European Commission, led by von der Leyen, began demanding that all EU member states remove the protective status from wolves and start their extermination.

Immediately, all scientists and environmentalists opposed such proposals. Even the world’s largest international organization, WWF, was shocked by the European Commission’s plans to exterminate wolves.

Scientists demanded the proposal be rejected, stating there is a lack of scientific evidence, and WWF biodiversity expert Sabien Liman even claimed the law is motivated solely by personal reasons! Those words were a pointed rebuke to von der Leyen.

Moreover, scientists stated that the Commission is spreading a study on the necessity of killing wolves, which was paid for by von der Leyen herself. This “so-called study” noted that there are about 20,300 wolves across the EU.

Experts are shaking their heads: such numbers have never existed, not even in recent scientific analyses. Meanwhile, officials in their “so-called study” write that the wolf population in the EU is rapidly growing, and the damage to livestock is increasing.

Supposedly, von der Leyen tried to prove through a paid study that wolves kill about 65,000 domestic animals annually in the EU. Allegedly, 73% of them are sheep and goats, and the rest are cattle and even horses! Almost all these killings supposedly occurred in Spain, France, and Italy.

...and now the most important part: governments compensated farmers for each animal killed! That is, they took money from the budget, from taxpayers’

pockets.

Meanwhile, the authorities wrote in their study that, supposedly, in German lands, the number of attacks decreased due to “adequate preventive measures.” With these words, officials are trying to say that more wolves were killed, and therefore there were fewer attacks on livestock!

What do scientists say in response to this?

First. The offended Grandma Ursula von der Leyen paid for a false study to push for the mass killing of wolves across all EU member states.

Second. No real SCIENTIFIC research or evidence was presented. Empty cries and completely inadequate statements, including the presented statistical data!

Third. In the last 40 years, THERE HAS NOT BEEN A SINGLE RECORDED WOLF ATTACK ON HUMANS RESULTING IN DEATH.

Fourth. This is purely a lobbying campaign, which on one hand allows for “laundering” millions of euros in the “fight against the evil monster,” and on the other hand, to write off millions more euros for “compensations for poor farmers.” Naturally, farmers will blame any animal losses (including those they killed and ate themselves) on wolves. To get money! No proof is needed, just report

it to the authorities.

Such passions are flaring up in the European Union.

At the time of writing my book, several EU countries have already announced support for the European Commission’s proposal and are beginning the mass slaughter of wolves in their territories.

I have studied a vast array of research on wolves in the European Union, including much information found on the authorities’ calls to “rid great Europe of wolves.”

A number of officials’ statements were related to the fact that besides livestock, wolves are destroying populations of rare bison, moose, and red deer!

A decisive response came from scientists who conducted a large-scale study to find out why animal numbers are declining! The study became international, conducted by wildlife ecologists from the University of Freiburg. They analyzed all factors affecting the population of red deer in Europe.

It turned out that HUNTING AND LAND USE by humans affect animal population density, but not large predators like wolves, bears, and lynxes.

To prove this, specialists gathered data on the population density of red deer across 492 sites (where the study was conducted) in 28 European countries! They assessed the impact of factors such as the presence of large predators, habitat productivity, human activity, climate change, and the actual conservation status of the areas.

This vast dataset was analyzed, and the results showed that it was specifically due to human hunting that the population of red deer was reduced.

Meanwhile, THE PRESENCE OF PREDATORS DID NOT AFFECT THE DENSITY OF THE DEER POPULATION. In some areas, the number of deer only decreased when lynx, bears, and wolves all converged on a small territory at once. But after that, the numbers completely stabilized!

Predators cause no harm to ecosystems; on the contrary, they support their health.

“Our research shows that the return of a large predator, such as the wolf, does not significantly impact the population of the red deer. This is because in Central Europe, human influence predominates, both indirectly through interference in the red deer's habitat and directly through the killing of animals,” says Marco

Heurich, professor of wildlife ecology at the Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Freiburg.

Incidentally, the professor is the initiator of this study.

Chapter 25. Wolves like people

Let's take a little detour. I want to tell you about how similar we are: humans and wolves. At least in some aspects. But these aspects are important and relate to social evolution.

Researcher Christopher Kozans from the University of Mary Washington suggests the wolf as a suitable model for studying monogamy. He draws direct analogies with humans. The scientist argues that humans and wolves share similar behavioral traits. For thousands of years, wolves have lived in the same ecological niche as humans. Both species chase prey across open plains, primarily using their legs and vision. In this case, living in a group allows them to kill animals much larger than themselves. Thus, social/group behavior becomes most important, determining the future of the entire species.

"Humans are wolves that hunt elephants and whales," the scientist writes bluntly.

Like humans, wolves form stable family pairs. A pack is essentially an extended family.

Wolves stick together in these families—packs—all year round. They hunt together and care for the growing generation. There is a social hierarchy within the pack. Even joint ceremonies, rituals, and meals! In general, just like humans!

The scientist finds many examples that monogamy in both species arose as a necessity for the prolonged upbringing of offspring. This led to the doubling of neurons responsible for care, socialization, and communication. Once again: the so-called "mirror neurons," which provide social skills, are quite similar in humans and wolves!

The current dominant scientific assumption is that the family became a key stage in human evolution. When, thanks to collective hunting, ancient humans began to obtain more meat, they were able to move beyond their initially narrow ecoregion and spread across the Earth in different ecological conditions.

Studies of wolves show that wolf monogamy facilitates the transmission of skills necessary for cooperative hunting of large prey. Christopher Kozans proposes the theory that human monogamy most likely evolved as a similar adaptation for hunting large animals.

How could this have happened? The wolf-human ecological niche does not limit the possibility of large prey by anything other than skills and cooperation. In other words, the key to success is complex skills plus coordinated group work. Humans developed such hunting behavior to the extent that they could deliberately and systematically hunt elephants and whales. The same happened with wolves.

The fact that wolves and humans have some similarities as a result of coevolution (linked joint evolution) since the two species encountered each other, especially after the domestication of the wolf, is not news. Such a scientific theory has been argued and demonstrably shown since at least the 1990s.

There are theories suggesting that the psychological, behavioral, and social similarities between humans and wolves are the result of even deeper convergent evolution. It is proposed that humans independently evolved to hunt prey larger than themselves in Africa. Meanwhile, wolves independently evolved with adaptations to hunt animals larger than themselves in the Northern Hemisphere. The meeting of wolves and humans then led not to competition, as might have been expected, but to symbiosis. It became a completely new form of species interaction that had not been seen

before. Thus, some wolves became dogs, becoming the first domesticated species for humans.

In scientific studies on the domestication of wolves into dogs, there is debate about whether dogs descended from wild wolf pups raised and kept in camps by hunter-gatherers, or from a subpopulation of wolves that became accustomed to humans outside human communities, scavenging garbage and leftovers from human hunters. In my opinion, dogs most likely descended from wild wolf pups kept in camps as companions. But for understanding the closeness of humans with wolves, and later with dogs, this is not important. Joint evolution has been reliably demonstrated by scientists for a long time.

It's important here to mention the applicability of scientific knowledge to the population of the gray wolf that still exists today. I want to emphasize: the wolf is an exceptionally social creature! No family/pack, no wolf! Like humans, wolves require prolonged learning. Wolf pups do not possess innate skills. They need extensive training within the wolf pack. Any efforts aimed at preserving the natural population of the Russian Wolf should focus on maintaining full wolf packs.

And this is yet another aspect of the wolf's vulnerability as an exclusively social animal: it's not just about reproducing the species and passing on genes. It's also about passing on social skills! A wolf pup raised outside a pack will never become a wolf. It simply won't know what it means to be a wolf. It won't have the skills for social behavior, hunting, or living in the natural environment.

Chapter 26. Fleeing the chase

The wolf has a tough fate. People drive away the custodians of the wild, surrounding them with red flags! And they shoot the wolf just for being a wolf. For the mere fact of its existence on Earth.

Now you know about the situation with wolves in European countries. Do you think it's easy for wolves to survive when their habitat is reduced to nothing? When around every corner, people lie in wait, eager to kill, shoot, and destroy?

Of course not.

I want to tell you how difficult it is for wolves to survive in the age of humans.

An event that made the news in early 2024: A gray wolf from Germany traveled over 1,200 km and crossed three countries. Just to survive! Simply to survive.

This was reported by Spanish scientists from the University of Barcelona. They managed to track the longest wolf trail in Europe in the history of observation! Researchers determined the wolf's movements by its

droppings.

The wolf had been monitored before, even given the code name GW1909m. According to scientists, this gray wolf was born near the city of Nordhorn in Germany, then began migrating toward Spain! It had to cover 1,240 kilometers, crossing all of France to reach the Catalan Pyrenees in Spain. It settled near a local village.

Previously, the record was held by another wolf, covering 1,092 kilometers, when the wild's custodian migrated between Norway and Finland.

What's wrong here?

The issue is that lone wolves are forced to travel enormous distances for survival in densely populated Europe. Honestly, the task is nearly impossible because wolves are hunted. They have to pass near cities, towns, through farmland, where dangerous poisons are scattered, traps are set, and animals are simply shot, calling it "sport."

And as wolves become fewer, they have to go as far as possible. As I mentioned earlier, there's a lot of interbreeding among wolves, and inbreeding leads to further population decline. So lone wolves have to wander great distances to prevent genetic isolation and inbreeding.

Now, wolf GW1909m is somewhere in Spain. But most likely, it's either already been killed or will be very soon! Because "that's how it is." The hope is only that it manages to reproduce and its offspring can get as far away from people as possible!

Since Europe is now pushing for the extermination of wolves, naturally, the last populations are in even greater danger.

Chapter 27. Restore to destroy again.

There are some attempts to restore wolf populations in countries where biogeocenoses have already reached a critical situation. Let's be honest, it's a catastrophe. So far, these attempts are local, reintroducing wolves into the wild "one by one." This has no significant impact on the recovery of ecosystems. Much is ignored, including the complexity of biological interconnections.

Suppose wolves were exterminated—this disrupted the food chains, leading to the extinction of simple organisms, insect species, and the degradation of plant life. A few wolves were brought back in hopes that everything would be fixed, but in reality, they were doomed to further extinction simply because the links NECESSARY FOR THE WOLVES' SURVIVAL disappeared after their eradication.

None of this is taken into account. Nor is the gradual degradation of wolf packs due to inbreeding, for example. And this only becomes apparent over time!

Moreover, when restoring wolf packs, the greatest threat is ignored: the human impulse to get rid of wolves!

I want to tell you about what happened in New Mexico (USA) in 2018. It's an extremely illustrative tragic story.

Wildlife officials officially announced that a record number of dead Mexican gray wolves were found in 2018. This despite years of efforts to restore populations in the state! All the wolves were killed by humans. Initially, five dead wolves were found in one year, and then the number reached 17. Since reintroduction in 1998, this is the highest number of wolves killed.

It was reported that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted an investigation but completely withheld specific data on how the animals were killed from the public.

"A very small population of Mexican gray wolves in the wild cannot sustain such a level of mortality for long... The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must immediately address the losses and resume releasing captive-bred wolf families," said Bryan Bird, director of the Southwest organization Defenders of Wildlife.

In other words, over twenty years, a few wolf packs were restored after their complete extermination, and federal programs were introduced to protect Mexican wolves! But time passes, and people just kill the wolves. And they are once again on the brink of complete extinction. Twenty years of work yielded no results; all observations, research, and hopes for ecosystem recovery are nullified. Now it's necessary to try to restore populations all over again!

I studied the situation in the state closely, as there is no data on how exactly the wolves died. This information is hidden by the authorities themselves. But I managed to find a lot of information that the wolves' deaths coincided with conflicts with local farmers, who actively called for the extermination of nature's custodians! At that time, farmers demanded an end to wolf protection and actively spread calls to "wipe them all out."

Most likely, they scattered poisoned bait to destroy the last Mexican wolves. For instance, in the same 2018, the U.S. Forest Service (in New Mexico) revoked the grazing permit of a ranch owner who caught and killed a wolf in 2015! The wolf was wearing a radio collar. It took three years of investigation to prove that this farmer killed the wolf, which is on the brink of extinction. As a result, the grazing permit was revoked.

This led to dissatisfaction among other farmers throughout the state, and then authorities began finding dead wolves. Additionally, it became known that ranch owners were actively purchasing telemetry receivers to track the location of collared wolves!

Such a terrifying story. A tragic reality in which the last remaining wolves must survive! Mexican gray wolves were actually exterminated back in the 1970s, and only through incredible efforts were they brought back in 1998. Three packs were released in eastern Arizona, a very costly operation! Within months, five of the eleven wolves were killed by poachers (most likely the same farmers), and the remaining ones had to be captured by scientists and bred in captivity before being released back into the wild.

And now they are being killed again, with farmers buying devices to detect wolves and poisoning them en masse.

Chapter 28. Once more about hybrids

Sometimes it's incredibly difficult for people to convey a problem or explain what's happening with wildlife. Especially when people don't want to understand the issues under constant emotional pressure! And when emotions take over, a person can hardly think critically or make objective decisions.

I want to discuss in more detail the problem of wolf-dog hybridization and the threat posed by roaming packs of stray dogs.

When I posted notes about this on social media, I was immediately hit with a barrage of sharp criticism from animal rights communities. Specifically, those who work with dogs! I was accused of lobbying for the interests of the authorities just because I dared to say that wolf-dog hybrids exist and threaten wildlife.

So, even when you know the problem for sure, you can't speak about it?

The main points of the accusations against me were:

“Wolf-dog hybrids don't exist; this was invented by the authorities to justify killing dogs.”

“Stray dog packs don't bother anyone and don't pose a threat to wildlife.”

I was also told that these “myths” were invented by the Russian authorities to push through lobbying laws for killing stray dogs.

When I provided scientific research from Russian scientists on the spread of wolf-dog hybrids in the wild, I was met with accusations that “the scientists represent the interests of the authorities, and the research is a lie.”

Here's an excerpt from one letter:

“...I never would have thought you'd become a butcher!! What are your Russian scientists' studies supposed to prove?!! Don't tell me you don't understand that they're openly paid off by our authorities. Have you ever wondered why there are no wolf-fox hybrids, even though they're in the same family?!!! Or why there's not a single scientific study in Europe, and they don't say that wolf-dog hybrids threaten nature??

Before you speak about anything, I highly recommend you, Pavel, study the topic!!! Right now, you've just pitted the conservation community against you and

undermined trust in you. Believe me, you've lost more than half of those who respected you for protecting nature!!! And my trust too...”

That's the kind of letter, or rather an excerpt from it. I'll talk about wolf-fox hybrids in the following chapters, but for now, let's address the “clashing of interests.”

As a researcher of environmental issues, it's important for me to protect wildlife specifically. I don't deal with political, social, or public issues. I physically can't do everything at once, and any internal social problems significantly distract me from my mission. I just get lost and then can't focus on the tasks of protecting and researching environmental issues!

It's tough for me.

But still, it's necessary to sort out this issue so that no one can destabilize my readers.

RESEARCHER'S OPINION

I always operate with facts and scientific evidence, referring to a large number of studies by scientists. I study. After that, I prepare review materials, articles, and books. I also share personal experience.

Many of my readers know that over the years, my team and I have conducted major ecological expeditions to protect Russia's forests. We visited logging sites, remote corners of the wild, and solved environmental problems! We documented crimes and violations in the country's forestry.

I've personally encountered packs of stray (feral) dogs multiple times. Including during an expedition in the forests of the Kemerovo region, where we had to fend off a pack of dogs trying to attack our operator far from populated areas. Not far from our research camp, where we were filming ancient cedars.

So, I know firsthand about the problem of spreading dog packs and, indeed, wolf-dog hybrids. I have experience.

When I was told the problem doesn't exist, I provided scientific data from Russian scientists. When they said Russian scientists lie, “paid off by the authorities,” I provided numerous scientific studies by European scientists! To which I received criticism that no scientists can be trusted at all.

The story didn't end there. Various activists began spreading information on social media that I called for shooting wolf-dog hybrids and dog packs! Which is, of course, blatant lies and was never mentioned by me in

any context.

I'll publish my post on social media. Animal rights activists reposted this very entry and commented, “Pavel Pashkov showed his true colors: he called for killing dogs.”

“I've learned that some people are actively proposing to start killing wolf hybrids in the wild and packs of stray dogs. They clearly haven't read my recent material, which states that killings will lead to even more killings and problems. I even received letters with proposals to ‘kill dogs for salvation’ from some ‘animal rights activists.’”

One woman writes: “Pavel, I suggest poisoning dogs like they do in the USA. It won't harm nature, right? We'll scatter poisons in the cities.”

Honestly, it's horrifying. An extreme form of cruelty and COMPLETE misunderstanding of the problem. Any killings will lead to even more killings! THIS MUST NOT BE DONE. Especially using poisons and traps.

Suppose allowing the shooting of hybrids opens a "window" for hunting lobbyists in power! This would lead to the extermination not only of dogs but also of the last remaining wolves.

THE PROBLEM CAN ONLY BE SOLVED HUMANELY

And it must be done by scientists, society, and the government on a national scale. Together!

It's actually simple; the necessary initiatives just need to be pushed through by society in power:

1. Remove wolf-dog hybrids from nature by determining DNA (such methods have already been developed, as published in scientific research). Then sterilize them and place them in state-run private shelters.

2. Open state shelters across the country with public oversight! And convert all private shelters to state funding and control. Capture stray dogs and send them there + simultaneously launch the "A Dog in Every Home" program, giving dogs to families.

3. Implement severe penalties for those who abandon animals on the street. Introduce a system of control over pets with mandatory registration in the owner's name.

The average lifespan of a dog is 10–15 years; they will live peacefully in normal conditions. Thus, there will be no hybrids in the wild (no invasive species), and there won't be hungry packs of feral dogs around cities at garbage dumps.

Domestic animals will remain under the care of private owners and state supervision.

Scientists now say: there is a problem with the spread of hybrids and feral dogs, and the immune system of the wild cannot respond. This is a confirmed scientific fact.

So everyone needs to sit down together and make HUMANE decisions about the problem. And not even entertain the thought of killing anyone.

That's the post. It took just two days to go from attempts to prove there were no problems to outright lies! After which, I was branded as "the enemy of all dog lovers" for voicing the issue.

OPINION OF ACTIVISTS

Why such a wave of discontent? Where does all this aggression and anger come from?

The fact is that in Russia, the authorities have passed bills allowing regions to kill stray dogs. These bills do not align with the opinions of scientists and experts but are pushed by officials! Especially hunting lobbyists in power.

To solve the problem with my proposed methods requires resources, time, and effort. But for killing—no resources are needed, just permission! Then dogs are either shot or poisoned en masse.

Naturally, this caused public discontent. And people can be understood! You can't blame society for opposing killings.

But unfortunately, emotions take over, the problem becomes extremely sensitive, and as a result, any analysis or scientific observations take a "back seat."

Hence the aggression, the misunderstanding. I published an article about the situation with stray dogs and hybrids in Russia, but only a few read it! Meanwhile, almost everyone didn't even try to understand the problem and followed the cries of individual activists that "Pavel Pashkov calls for killing dogs."

In other words, lies breed new lies.

Let me publish the article as a separate chapter.

Chapter 29. Article: "Why are hybrids and feral dogs dangerous to wildlife?"

We stand with you in defending wolves, opposing their extermination! In the wild, wolves act as nature's janitors, providing a whole suite of indispensable ecological services. They regulate the population of wild animals, create an "ecology of fear," forcing herds, like deer, to constantly move from place to place, preventing overgrazing. Wolves prey on the weak and sick animals, maintaining the health of entire populations and ensuring strong offspring.

These functions are ingrained by nature, and no one but the wolf can perform them in ecosystems!

Now, due to the decline in wolf populations worldwide, we are witnessing the destabilization of ecosystems that have been stable for millennia. Some animals are becoming too numerous, while others are catastrophically few! The number of sick and weak animals is increasing, and herds of deer and roe deer

stop migrating, residing along riverbanks and trampling crucial parts of the plant world.

Wolves also regulated the numbers of other predators, and now there's no one to perform these functions. As a result, jackals, for example, have begun to spread beyond their habitats, eating bird eggs, chicks, and the young of other animals.

But there are problems that few people know about.

The spread of invasive species dangerous to wildlife has begun, dealing a real blow to ecosystems. These are hybrids of wolves and dogs, and feral dogs themselves.

THE RESCUE OF A MOOSE CALF

In the Ulyanovsk region, people saved a moose calf. Such news... — ...probably good!

"Probably good" because such news, I would say, is very ambiguous!

But let's take it step by step.

The calf was found near a gas station in the area of the village of Mullovka, Melekessky district, Ulyanovsk region, on December 18, 2023.

The poor thing was driven there by stray dogs. It's simple: a pack of stray dogs separated the calf from its family and tried to tear it apart and eat it. But people

intervened: local residents chased the dogs away from the bitten calf and reported the incident to the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Ulyanovsk region. And the hunting department staff quickly came to the rescue.

The calf is about 6–7 months old. On the same day, the moose calf was taken to the Ulyanovsk Zoo, where veterinarians examined it. Bites and wounds were found on the animal's body. The situation is not critical, but it requires treatment.

The calf is placed in a quarantine enclosure under the supervision of veterinarians. After this, a special commission of specialists will be created to decide its future. Most likely, the calf can no longer be released into its natural habitat. It will remain in semi-captivity or in the zoo. And the zoo is the best option for it.

I think it's clear why I called the news "probably good." On one hand, the calf was saved and didn't become food for the dog pack. But on the other hand, the path to its native forests is closed. This calf will never become part of its native ecosystem again.

Another example: stray dogs are massively exterminating wild animals in the forests of the Voronezh region. And this example is definitely "bad" — a huge number of animals are dying in already depleted

ecosystems!

In the vicinity of the Voronezh Reserve in 2023–2024, the bodies of torn-apart roe deer are being found en masse. The reserve administration admits: there is no way to protect wild animals from dog packs. The Voronezh Reserve is surrounded by eighteen settlements, each with dozens of such packs living on the outskirts.

The head of the scientific department of the Voronezh Reserve, Natalia Romashova, provided the media with reports on cases of hoofed animal deaths: roe deer, deer, etc. Each case is investigated to determine the cause of death. More than a quarter of the animals that die (26%) are victims of stray dogs.

— Dogs have their own "signature" — they tear their prey from behind by the legs. Roe deer, deer, even a stag have died. Now, in winter, the deep snow with a crust can't support the heavy deer, and they fall through and struggle to move. Dogs chase their prey over the crust. Since the beginning of the year (Note: 2024), 10–15 such cases have been registered, — explains Natalia Borisovna Romashova.

Stray dogs go hunting not because they are hungry and looking for food. There is plenty of food in anthropogenic landscapes and at dumps. They chase, hunt, and tear wild animals simply following their instincts. After killing, they just leave the carcass.

— The forest is the habitat of wild animals, not dogs. Yet officials say that after vaccination and sterilization, they release dogs back to their original habitat. But for dogs, their habitat is a kennel, an apartment, an enclosure. When they are released after the TNR procedure

(Note: TNR in Russia is a method of dealing with stray dogs known as "Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return," legalizing their free presence in urban environments.) onto the street, even in the city, they have no source of food, no shelter, no owner... It's a completely dead-end story, — says Natalia Romashova, —

— Experience shows that the character of a sterilized animal does not change. And if a dog has already hunted in a pack, this instinct becomes ingrained. And what can we do? On specially protected natural territories, shooting dogs is prohibited. If the number of animals exceeds the capacity of our lands, we can get permits for their regulation, but this applies to wolves.

The reserve staff say they're strictly limited by the law. For them, any legal action against stray dogs boils down to warning the heads of local administrations about their responsibility for population control. But since there are many settlements around, proving which territory the stray dogs belong to is practically impossible. It creates a vicious cycle where no officials are held accountable for anything!

AN EVEN MORE DANGEROUS ISSUE IS HYBRIDS.

"Wolves and dogs are the same species, so they can easily interbreed and produce hybrids," says Alexander Mishin, a senior researcher at the Voronezh Reserve and a mammal zoologist.

"This usually happens when the wolf population is disrupted. Wolves live in packs, which are family groups with a lead female and male. Typically, only these two animals reproduce, while other adults may act as caretakers for the pups. These families are not large—up to 12 to 15 individuals. The group lives in its own territory. Normally, they see members of other families as competitors and drive them away. Wolves don't like dogs either. But when the pack is disrupted, for example, by mass extermination, wolves can breed with dogs. A lone wolf might pair with a dog if they meet."

Experts from the Voronezh Reserve say this has happened in recent history. Starting from the post-war years of the 20th century, wolves were considered "harmful animals." In the Voronezh region, they were nearly exterminated, leading to the creation of wolf-dog hybrids. Twenty years later, when attitudes toward wolves changed, the population gradually recovered.

According to specialists, there were up to 30 wolves in the reserve in the early 2000s. But by the early 2010s, regular monitoring stopped. Systematic study of wolves resumed only after 2012. In 2015, camera traps were introduced, and they captured, to put it mildly, "strange wolves."

"Some had floppy ears, others were unusually shaggy," says zoologist Alexander Mishin.

"And in early March 2018, a den was found in the reserve with month-old pups, even though wolf offspring usually appear in late March or early April."

Now, Voronezh zoologists warn that conditions for the emergence of wolf-dog hybrids have been recreated in the region, just like half a century ago. Across the Voronezh region, the wolf population is declining due to hunters and poachers using long-range weapons and modern equipment like ATVs and snowmobiles. As of

early 2024, the wolf population in the Voronezh Reserve is only eight individuals.

Wolf-dog hybrids are also often deliberately bred by people, including in the Voronezh region.

Here's what Elena Sherstyanykh, head of the Voronezh Animal Protection Center "Our Nature," says:

"Upon learning that wolves and dogs produce fertile offspring, some people immediately want to have such a magnificent shaggy wolf at home, because they're huge and beautiful like in the series. But experts believe hybrids are almost impossible to train and recognize only one owner. They inherit distrust of humans from wolves and lack of fear from dogs. Moreover, wolf-dog hybrids and stray dogs are more likely than wolves to carry dangerous infections like rabies, ringworm, or mange, as they interact with both wild animals and humans."

"I researched this issue and found no reviews with evidence of good hunting with hybrids. One seasoned hunter wrote that in his 47 years of experience, he hadn't encountered any video or reliable oral account of quality hunting with such animals. Meanwhile, there are many documented cases of hybrids attacking their owners, children, and dogs they grew up with, as well as

other hunting dogs encountered during hunts, or simply animals on the street."

Everyone notes that wolf genes, besides providing endurance, strength, and a keen sense of smell, give the animals a lack of understanding—why serve humans? A wolfdog won't attack game first during a hunt if it's dangerous for them. They're very cautious, conserve energy, and might only finish off prey after the working dogs have done the main job. Facing difficulties in keeping wolfdogs, owners often "lose" them on purpose.

"For example, we regularly receive reports of deer killed by stray dogs. We understand that people only learn about 5 to 10% of cases; the rest go unnoticed. I see no point in helping wild forest animals while there are so many wolf-dog hybrids in our forests. They're so destructive to wildlife."

As for the laws, it's a complete mess!

By law, all animals in the forest fall into some category. Simply put, they're either a hunting resource, a protected species, or just a wild animal. But dogs and wolf-dog hybrids have no legal category! Their presence in the forest is unnatural. Formally, they're domestic animals without an owner, unsupervised. The only law currently applied to them is the "Responsible

Treatment" law.

Therefore, when an inspector or ranger sees a pack of dogs or hybrids tearing apart and killing wild animals, they have no right to use weapons and do nothing. Because at best, they'll lose their job for it. At worst, they'll be held accountable, including criminally under the law...

KILLING IS NOT ALLOWED

Now to the most important point. Killing or mass poisoning of dogs and hybrids is NOT ALLOWED. This will only lead to greater consequences and open a “window” for the hunting lobby. Suppose, if the killing of hybrids is announced—amidst the uproar, the last wolves will be finished off.

This must not be done.

ONLY HUMANE METHODS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM

And such methods exist. Specialists can identify hybrids in the wild using DNA and remove them to state shelters! Establish state-run open shelters in each region with public oversight and full funding.

A) To prevent the spread of stray dogs in the wild (an invasive species), sterilize the dogs and place them in shelters. Implement a social program “A Dog in Every Home” and, with further monitoring, involve people in raising dogs, giving them to families.

B) Carefully extract hybrids from the wild and direct them to state shelters. Scientists have recently developed methods for identifying hybrids through DNA.

With such state efforts, the problem will be completely resolved in the next 10 to 15 years. Control will be established!

No killings, poisonings, and certainly no “windows” for the hunting lobby are appropriate here! Only the collaboration of society, the state, and scientists for a real solution to the problem.

LET'S SUM UP

In our country, there are many movements to protect stray dogs. However, there are very few organizations that genuinely protect the wild nature! Protecting the wild is more challenging; it’s “somewhere out there,” while the dogs are right here nearby.

Unfortunately, we are currently witnessing a critical spread of hybrids and feral dogs, which should not be in the wild. This is an extremely dangerous invasive

species, harming nature and posing a threat to an already fragile animal world.

It’s actually very simple: imagine foreign bodies being introduced into your body. Meanwhile, your immunity (in nature’s case, the wolves that are being exterminated) has been suppressed. The foreign bodies are identified by the body as something similar to its own immune cells, and therefore the body cannot recognize the danger.

But unlike your immune cells, the foreign bodies start frantically rushing through the body, destroying it! Simply killing everything, disrupting the function of all organs, and ultimately destroying the immune system.

THE SAME THING IS HAPPENING TO WILD NATURE NOW

From the perspective of the Biosphere, as a single living organism, humans first destroyed the wolves, which were part of the immunity and maintained order! Then, instead of wolves, they introduced a SIMILAR BUT EXTREMELY DANGEROUS INVASIVE SPECIES.

Chapter 30. The Balkan lynx is dying out due to the spread of dog packs

You're now aware of the issue of wolf-dog hybrids and roaming dog packs. Let's turn to confirmed scientific facts.

I'll start with the Balkan lynx, which is on the brink of complete extinction.

In 2023, Macedonian zoologists reached a conclusion that was surprising even to them: stray dogs are threatening the rare Balkan lynx.

Experts estimate that in the natural habitat of the Balkan lynx, which spans the mountainous regions of Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia, there are about 40 of these solitary cats left. This means, as you understand, they are practically beyond the point of self-reproduction!

For many years, the Balkan lynx has struggled to survive, retreating to remote mountainous areas. Deforestation destroyed its habitat. Poachers

relentlessly hunted this elusive mountain cat. The rarer it became, the more it was valued as a unique trophy. Such a sad story for the species is nothing new.

The crucial point here is this: a predator always goes extinct along with the animals it depends on. A few years ago, zoologists discovered a rapid decline in the wild deer population in the Balkans. Deer make up about 70 percent of the lynx's diet. There were various theories about the causes: disease, epidemics, poisoning. But all these assumptions were wrong. Scientists found another powerful enemy of the deer, which was destroying the herds. It turned out to be packs of wild dogs.

Feral dogs have long been a problem in the vast territories of the Balkans. Large packs raised public health concerns in cities and harmed livestock in rural communities before. For example, in North Macedonia, where it's estimated that about 6,000 wild dogs live in the capital, Skopje alone. There is no official data on the number of feral dogs across the country.

“We realized there is another predator that, so to speak, is not typical or natural. And that's wild dogs,” says zoologist Daim Melovski from the Macedonian Ecological Society, which has been monitoring the lynx

in Mavrovo National Park since 2006. “And this is another predator the lynx has to compete with.”

And, as it turns out, the lynx is rapidly losing the competition for food—packs of feral dogs are penetrating further into the last remnants of natural biocenoses.

About four years ago, a group of scientists began to notice this new threat. Wild dogs are consuming more and more deer in lynx habitats.

In Macedonia, as in many other countries, there are animal rights organizations at work. Programs for “capture, sterilization, vaccination, return” for dogs are being implemented and lobbied in government bodies. But the problem is not being solved. Even some activists from these organizations have started to acknowledge this.

“We try to find homes for some of them… but unfortunately, some end up in rural mountainous areas, where they continue to live as wild animals,” admits Emilia Gogova, one such animal rights activist from Skopje.

Experts from the real scientific community say that the growing population of stray dogs has already led to numerous problems. And the ability of dogs to mate with

wolves, creating hybrids, already threatens the destruction of the true wild gray wolf population.

Take another look at what's happening:

— About 5–10 years ago, zoologists in our country and others began recording the expanding packs of wild dogs and wolf-dog hybrids. The example of the Balkan lynx is just one of many such cases.

— Feral dogs have proven to be much more adapted to the current habitat than wild animals. On one hand, they are not afraid of people and can feed at garbage dumps or landfills. On the other hand, they have mastered the remaining patches of wilderness. And they actively destroy herbivorous animals, simultaneously depriving wild predators of food.

— In many countries, the situation has developed where feral dog packs are literally wiping out the last representatives of the rarest “red-listed” wild animal species. Even reserve administrations can do nothing about it! In fact, the protective status of feral dogs has turned out to be much higher than that of any endangered wild animal. This is a bureaucratic absurdity, where an aggressive minority of so-called “animal rights activists” from the public managed to lobby for laws in government bodies that contradict

basic common sense and destroy the last islands of wilderness.

Chapter 31. Why aren't there hybrids of wolves and foxes in nature?

Dogs and foxes are distantly related members of the canine family, yet they are completely different. They cannot produce offspring; this is how nature intended it.

But have there ever been such cases in nature?

Yes. There was one such case. Recently, the first data on the emergence of a dog-fox hybrid was published. However, this fox is much closer to dogs than to the true red fox found in the forests of Russia.

Let's delve into the details.

In 2021, the first hybrid of a dog and a fox was discovered. It was a complete surprise for scientists! Naturally, they began to study the case to understand how this could have happened.

The hybrid was found in Brazil and was nicknamed "dogxim" (meaning a mix of a dog and a pampas fox). The hybrid was a female, hit by a car, after which the

driver quickly took the strange little dog to a wildlife rehabilitation center. Specialists immediately noticed the unusual combination of physical and behavioral characteristics!

She barked like a dog, yet by appearance, she was a fox. Genetic testing was conducted, marking the first documented case of a dog-fox hybrid!

Genetic analysis showed she had 76 chromosomes.

For comparison: domestic dogs have 78 chromosomes, while pampas foxes have 74.

Let me briefly explain what chromosomes are—they are structures in which DNA (hereditary information) is packed inside the cell nucleus. Nature has embedded the necessary hereditary data, genetics, in each animal species this way.

For instance, in the wild, a tiger and a lion would never mate and produce offspring! Nature has ensured the separation of species. And not just because they have different habitats. In Africa, where lions live, there are cheetahs, for example. They are also part of the feline family, but they don't "make babies" with lions.

However, the more closely related (genetically) two species are, the greater the chance of a hybrid appearing. Dogs and wolves have similar genetics, so

mixing between them is possible! They diverged only about 11,000 to 35,000 years ago, when humans began actively domesticating dogs.

But! Nature has also ensured that hybrids do NOT spread further in nature, even if they do appear somehow. It makes hybrids sterile, meaning they cannot produce offspring.

In scientific terminology, this is called a "biological dead end."

Now, with the emergence of the dog-fox hybrid, scientists are concerned. Ecosystems are already damaged, and many wild animal species are on the brink of extinction in the coming decades! Meanwhile, all the crucial links in biological systems (including wolves) have been eradicated by humans.

The spread of wolf-dog and dog-fox hybrids is a huge problem, especially for vulnerable animal populations already on the brink of extinction. Scientists say that contacts between wild and domestic animals are rapidly increasing! Having occupied 70% of all land, humans are encroaching on the last 30% of relatively untouched wilderness.

Where animals once retreated under human pressure.

But now, there's nowhere left to retreat.

I know you'll immediately wonder: should we fear that domestic dogs will start mixing with our red foxes in the forests of Russia?

There's no need to worry about that. The fact is, pampas foxes are genetically very different from the red foxes in our forests. The genetic distance between them is vast!

Just for example, the red fox has about 34 chromosomes, while the domestic dog has 78. They are as different as a lion and a cheetah in Africa!

Chapter 32. Are all wolves really wolves?

Despite the apparent contradiction in the question, it's entirely correct and appropriate!

Not all animals we consider wolves are actually wolves! Moreover, this is one of the crucial reasons why there is an urgent and pressing need to address the protection of the wild Russian Wolf population!

Here are some data, for example, on the population-genetic structure of wolves in the Russian North as of 2024. These were shared by Konstantin Tirronen, head of the zoology laboratory at the Institute of Biology.

Scientists studied changes at the gene pool level in wolves from Karelia, Leningrad, and Arkhangelsk regions. They compared the genetic diversity of the species under moderate hunting levels, intensive hunting conditions, and in an untouched population living in the Onezhskoye Pomorye National Park in the Arkhangelsk region.

More than 650 samples of biomaterials collected by hunters in various areas were studied. And, according to researchers, wolf-dog hybrids are increasingly common.

"Our research confirms that wolves were previously genetically pure (thoroughbred). All hybrids were found in Karelia between 2017 and 2022, indicating relatively recent and significant events that led to their appearance in the population. For example, in the Lahdenpohja district, a black-colored individual was found among normal wolves. Similar findings are known in the Leningrad region and southern Finland," —

says wolf biology specialist Konstantin Tirronen.

Why are REAL EXPERTS both in our country and abroad so concerned about the genetic purity of wolves?

"Well, whether wolves are black or look like poodles! What difference does it make!" — say the amateurs.

The issue is this: genetics is linked not only to the external traits of a species but also forms the foundation of behavior and adaptation in the environment. The fact that wolves and dogs are essentially one species and can produce viable offspring is a major problem. To simplify a bit, hybridization results in acquiring not only external but also internal "dog" traits.

The second part of the problem is the pack sociality of wolves and dogs. Many behavioral models are learned by the pup. A wolf pup needs to learn to live in its pack, hunt in a group, and successfully interact with other members. And the behavioral models of wolf and dog packs are completely different!

I'll just give a figurative example to make it clear to any non-specialist: imagine a dachshund and an Afghan hound. If you're not familiar with these distinctive breeds, just look at photos online, and everything will become clear.

The dachshund is a breed of South German burrowing hunting dogs. Long body, short legs—perfect for crawling into burrows after badgers or foxes.

The Afghan hound is a breed of hunting sighthound. Long legs and runs fast. Completely incapable of crawling into a burrow.

The idea of mixing such different dog breeds is not a great idea! The result is unpredictable. And the useful traits of each of these ancient hunting breeds will surely be lost!

The Gray European Wolf also has traits unique to it. Perfect adaptation to its habitat. Perfection honed by thousands of generations of evolution. And it is these

traits that allow the wolf to occupy its place in the natural ecological system.

When wolves are displaced by jackals, for example, jackals begin destroying the eggs of waterfowl. When wolves mix with dogs, they lose caution and stop fearing humans. There is no precise data to prove this quantitatively. But there is expert opinion from professionals who say: healthy wolf packs hunt and roam far from people. They try not to approach human dwellings. They avoid contact with humans. And, accordingly, they do not create problems for people.

Therefore, a healthy wolf pack will effectively fulfill its role in the biogeocenosis. Occupying its place, which is essentially meant for it. Binding the complex biological system into a cohesive whole.

Therefore, zoologists who understand the biology and behavior of wolves unanimously say: A wolf must remain a wolf! And we need to take necessary measures to preserve the natural population of wild wolves and maintain the characteristic genotype of the Gray Wolf.

Chapter 33. Wolf genetics

Is there anything that can be done about wolf-dog hybrids?

Is it possible to preserve the original genome of the Gray European Wolf?

And most importantly, can we eliminate hybrids using humane methods without unnecessary cruelty?

Yes, we can! Moreover, Europe already has practices in place. We can simply learn and use the proven techniques of zoologists!

Since 2021, a new method has been available that allows for the clear identification of wolf hybrids right in the forests, in their natural habitat. This method reliably identifies wolf-dog hybrids based on environmental samples like feces, fur, or saliva remnants. It offers much higher resolution than previous methods. The authors of the method say that in the future, it will become a standard routine procedure, allowing for comparable detection of hybridization indicators in any habitat.

In the spring of 2000, for the first time since humans exterminated wolves around 1850, wild wolf pups were born again in Germany, in northeastern Saxony. A wolf restoration program began in this region. Initially, the recovery was naturally slow. But over the past 10 years, there has been a dynamic expansion of the wolf pack range.

“Especially at the beginning of such recolonization, the likelihood increases that wolves will mate with domestic dogs—simply due to the lack of choice of sexual partners among their own species,” —

explains Dr. Karsten Nowak from the Frankfurt Museum of Natural History and head of the genomic biomonitoring program at the LOEWE Center for Translational Biodiversity Genomics, —

> “We can identify hybrids using DNA from samples of feces, fur, or saliva remnants of dead prey animals. The new method has much higher resolution than traditional methods and allows for reliable detection of hybridization events even across several generations.”

This has become possible thanks to the targeted selection of genome sites where domestic dogs and wolves differ from each other regardless of breed and

origin. Thus, through years of research, a new method has been developed that eliminates the need to match individual genetic profiles based on reference samples of wolves and dogs.

The work was carried out by a European team from a dozen countries: Romania, Slovenia, Italy, Spain, Germany, and others.

In reality, it's simple: it's just a huge database of wolf and dog genomes. Plus the ability for instant automatic comparison. The result of creating such an automated system is the new method, which allows for the reliable identification of any wolf-dog hybrids using any environmental samples.

Are there many such hybrids?

As it turns out, very few! In Germany, less than a dozen cases of hybridization between wolves and domestic dogs have been registered to date. This occurred in cases where female wolves could not find an unrelated “wolf” partner for mating, zoologists explain. And it will happen less frequently as the reviving wolf packs grow larger and stronger.

Cases of hybridization were discovered in Saxony in 2003, in Thuringia in 2017 and 2019. In these cases, the hybrids were simply removed from the wild so they

could not continue mating with wolves. There are no problems with removal—the difficulties were precisely with detection and identification. Reliable detection of wolf-dog hybrids is complicated by the close relationship between domestic dogs and wolves—hybrids can look very similar to genetically pure wolves.

They can be distinguished not by appearance, but by molecular-genetic characteristics. Recognizing hybrids resulting from wolf-dog mating is important for managing wolf behavior: hybrids can produce viable offspring and may spread dog genes throughout the wolf population if they mate with wolves again. Then, over time, the wolf gene pool could accumulate more dog genes.

One of the authors of the method, Berardino Cocciararo, talks about the results of years of observation:

> “In our study, we did not find an increased share of dog genes in wolf samples from Germany. Similar findings exist in other regions of Europe, where hybrids are consistently eliminated and where there are practically no stray domestic dogs, such as in Scandinavia or the Alpine region.”

The new method is already regularly used in wolf monitoring in Germany. Researchers propose standardized use of their method across Europe:

“This would allow us to identify areas where, for example, more stringent control of wild dogs is necessary to ensure ecological separation from wolves. Widespread use of the method to record hybridization indicators across Europe would also help us better understand regional differences in wolf-dog mixes,” —

says another author of the study, Jenni Harmoinen from the University of Oulu in Finland.

As you can see, the method exists. Tested in practice. All that's needed is the will and a sensible approach! And the wild Gray Wolf population can be preserved!

Chapter 34. How dogs destroy wolves

Packs of wolf-dog hybrids threaten European wolves. The conclusions of a 2019 study are as follows: Packs of wolf-dog hybrids can eradicate European wolves. This hybridization is caused by human activity. It's a direct consequence of habitat destruction. Wolves are encountering more and more free-roaming dogs, which threatens the “genetic identity” of wolves.

What's particularly interesting: The study compares the opinions of more than 40 leading zoologists in Europe on this issue. The data shows that virtually all scientists agree on the nature of the problem, but they differ on how to address it. So, as of today, there is complete scientific consensus on this issue! All REAL specialists in Europe unanimously say: the gray wolf population in Europe is under threat! And possibly the greatest threat to the wolf's survival is hybridization with dogs, followed by displacement by wolf-dog hybrids.

“We need to solve this problem before wolf-dog hybrids interbreed with wolves to such an extent that wolf populations are lost due to hybrid packs, making the conservation of wild populations impossible,” —

says Valerio Donfrancesco from the Center for Ecology and Conservation at the University of Exeter in Cornwall, —

> “In this study, we argue that scientific agreement is crucial to encourage decision-makers to act and to raise public awareness about this wolf conservation issue.”

“The fact that we know so little about the ecology, behavior, and social acceptability of wolf-dog hybrids exacerbates the problem.”

The study allowed scientists to share their views ANONYMOUSLY. ANONYMOUSLY because the issue of stray dogs has become extremely politicized in recent years. And real zoologists are simply afraid to express their REAL SCIENTIFIC OPINION, fearing physical retaliation.

All REAL SPECIALISTS agree that people should be informed about the impact of free-roaming dogs. And that governments should remove wolf-dog hybrids from

the last remaining wild wolf populations.

The only thing scientists disagreed on was the methods of removing hybrids and free-living packs of stray dogs. There is no consensus on whether they should be kept in captivity, sterilized and released, or simply killed.

Valerio Donfrancesco says:

> “The disagreements arose due to differences in ethical values among scientists of different profiles, such as ecologists and geneticists, due to a lack of data on the effectiveness of various interventions, and due to concerns from some scientists that, from a practical standpoint, allowing the removal of hybrids would open a legal loophole for killing wolves.”

Co-author of the study Paolo Ciucci from Sapienza University of Rome adds:

“Managing hybrids and wolf-dog crossbreeding should not be a taboo topic, especially in the scientific community.”

> “There are opportunities to reach further consensus among scientists if further research is directed at addressing pressing issues, such as the effectiveness

and feasibility of control measures, and their social acceptability."

"Scientists should not avoid this problem just because managing it seems overly complex."

By very rough estimates, there are currently about 17,000 wolves in Europe. The packs vary in size: there are regions with stable packs, and there are regions where wolves are either completely absent or efforts are being made to restore the previously existing wolf population. Seventeen thousand wolves is the total number across Europe in such distant countries as Spain and Greece in the south, and Finland and the Scandinavian countries in the north. This is too few for population stability.

But this is not the main issue that real specialists are trying to draw the attention of the public and governments to. The main problem now is the INVISIBILITY of the destruction of the true wolf. It seems to us that wolves exist. There are even more and more complaints from locals about wolf attacks. But these are no longer wolves, but dog packs! Wolf-dog hybrids, rapidly destroying the last wild animals in the last reserves.

And once again, I want to draw attention to the political bias surrounding wolf-dog hybrids and the danger of dog packs to wildlife. I myself faced extreme aggression when I simply tried to discuss these topics! European scientists fear for their lives and have therefore agreed to express their opinions only anonymously. And this is probably the most dangerous: a militant crowd of incompetent ignoramuses, truly ready to tear specialists apart just for expressing an expert opinion!

Chapter 35. How wolves are used for political purposes

I want to tell you a story that happened in February 2024 in Northern Minnesota (USA). A vivid example of how wolves are exploited for selfish political purposes.

A lone gray wolf in northern St. Louis County, without regard for the loggers who were destroying the forests at that moment, ran right past a massive industrial saw and fallen trees. He was running with all his might after a young antlerless deer! Right at the edge of the logging area, the wolf caught up with the deer, while the loggers enthusiastically filmed the whole thing.

Any sensible person would say: everything is normal. Natural processes! It can't be otherwise, since the wolf is a predator, made so by nature!

But in the USA, the authorities decided to use the video shot by the loggers to create public panic, to legalize even more killings of wild animals. To push through primarily criminal bills, lobbied by high-status hunters in power.

U.S. Representative Pete Stauber from Minnesota published the video of the wolf hunting the deer on social media and wrote:

“As you can see, wolves have lost all fear of humans and are becoming increasingly dangerous to livestock and pets, destroying our deer here.”

After that, the video spread among hunting lobbyists in power, who began to publish it one after another on their social media pages, calling for the wolf to be removed from the state's endangered species list.

In just a few days, a community of wildlife haters formed within the government, consisting primarily of avid hunters, who began holding public meetings throughout Minnesota to rally citizen support for the urgent extermination of wolves.

Stauber himself led this “anti-wolf” program, personally sending a letter to the state House of Representatives demanding that “animal removal” be prioritized in any spending bill planned for consideration in Minnesota in 2024. Simply put, he called for lifting the restriction on killing wild animals and allocating budget funds for it.

At public meetings, officials began showing people the video of the lone gray wolf hunting the deer! In this way, they tried to psychologically influence people, evoking

natural fears of predators.

Minnesota, by the way, is one of the few states where wolves have not yet been completely eradicated. In other states, wolves were massively poisoned, shot, and if that didn't align with state laws, they were simply captured and taken “somewhere far away.” Ultimately, wolves survived in a healthy stable population only in northern Minnesota, after which they were listed as endangered and hunting them was legally prohibited.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources stated that there are no problems with wolves in the state, and the population has not grown in 25 years. On the contrary, there are more reports of dead wolves being poisoned by farmers or shot by poachers.

Incidentally, the Department also refuted Stauber's claims that the number of wolf attacks on pets had allegedly increased. There is no data on increased danger from predators.

Moreover, scientists immediately responded, informing the public about their close work with wolves! Experts assert that wolves are one of the most monitored species in the state, with constant records and population counts. There is no reason to fear wolves, who try not to interfere with human life and generally always avoid

people!

Scientists also say that currently several federal agencies in Minnesota, in collaboration with leading universities and local Native American tribes, are tracking wolves using modern cameras and GPS trackers.

“If there were any significant expansion of the wolf's habitat, or a significant increase in population, or conflicts, or moral issues, it would be detected using the methods we employ,” says Dan Stark, a wolf expert from Minnesota.

Let me remind you that the management and protection of wolves is provided by private, non-governmental organizations and is funded solely by volunteers. Meanwhile, U.S. Representative Pete Stauber, along with a large number of officials and farmers, is demanding that wolf management be transferred to the government. This would allow for the lifting of restrictions on predator shooting and the passage of necessary hunting legislation!

I can't help but mention how government parties operate in the USA. We're constantly brainwashed with “vote for the Democrats” or “Democrats to the furnace, vote for the Republicans.” But all four presidential

administrations, Trump, Obama, Bush, and Clinton, actively demanded the removal of the protective status from wolves and declared open season on them. Officials from both parties unanimously supported the bills, though the courts in the states sided with the wolves and the public, rejecting all the proposed laws by the officials.

In other words, the judicial system stood up for the wolves!

Therefore, Stauber and his accomplices in power are now uniting, seeking funding to try to bypass judicial bans through measures in Congress. In this way, they could “suppress” the courts, scientists, and society to achieve the extermination of the last wolves in the USA.

Such a tragic story. There's a real fierce battle between the authorities and the wolves! They're using all sorts of tools, including psychological attacks on state residents: they simply scare them by showing videos of wolves hunting deer, so that out of fear, people will support these criminal bills.

Chapter 36. Hunt the 'infectious wolf' or is it not so clear-cut?

We read in the news about various zoonotic infections. Occasionally, reports surface in the media about isolated cases of plague in Central Asia, where the infection was contracted from local natural reservoirs through marmots or ground squirrels, which are traditionally hunted by local residents.

The COVID-19 pandemic popularized the term 'zoonotic infection.' Now, everyone is familiar with this phrase.

Under the pretext of combating African swine fever, entire wild boar populations are being wiped out, accused of 'spreading a terrible disease.'

Most people live in cities and are unaware of this, but rural residents from virtually any region know that for about the last ten years, there has been a systematic destruction of all living things in people's personal farms. Government agencies are seizing and mass-destroying people's livestock under the guise of fighting infections. Your geese or ducks can be taken at any

moment, with claims that 'avian flu was found in waterfowl.' Pigs will be confiscated, justified by the fight against African swine fever. And the last cow will be driven from the yard, killed, and the carcass burned because 'there's nodular dermatitis in the area.'

Many people are left with the impression of a dire situation regarding various infectious diseases. The same goes for wolves, which are demanded to be completely exterminated, with such proposals justified by the alleged 'horrifying infectious danger.' Most often, it's claimed that wolves supposedly spread rabies.

This is not true!

Wolves not only do NOT 'spread rabies,' but they also act as a controlling factor in the spread of infections. By eliminating sick and weakened animals, wolf packs actually prevent the onset of epidemics. The presence of wolves is precisely what prevents the mass spread of infectious diseases (epidemics). The expression 'wolf, the forest's janitor' didn't appear yesterday and is entirely justified!

I now want to look at the problem of zoonotic infections in general. To create a comprehensive picture of the situation.

So, first, let's define the concepts and terms.

> 'Zoonoses, zoonotic infections — a group of infectious and parasitic diseases whose pathogens are transmitted to humans from other animals. The pathogens of zoonoses and anthroponoses include protozoa, viruses, bacteria, fungi, helminths, and parasitic mites.'

'Anthroponoses, anthroponotic infections — a group of infectious and parasitic diseases whose pathogens can parasitize only in the human body under natural conditions.

The preservation of anthroponosis pathogens as a biological species is ensured by the continuous process of their transition from an infected person to a susceptible individual. This is facilitated by an evolutionarily developed transmission mechanism, which is the basis of the epidemic process. The main feature of anthroponosis spread is that the source of infection can only be an infected person.

The existence of anthroponosis pathogens as a biological species is maintained by the constant natural selection of strains circulating among the population and the time the pathogen spends in the infected person's body (sufficient for the transmission mechanism to be realized) until the infectious process is completed

(recovery, death).

Anthroponoses often progress less acutely than zoonoses, sometimes even in clinically asymptomatic forms, and in most cases are accompanied by lower mortality rates.'

This is the reference information from Wikipedia. And let me say right away, even at such a basic and widespread level of understanding, everything is distorted and inaccurate!

THE SPREAD OF DISEASES FROM HUMANS TO ANIMALS IS SIMPLY NOT CONSIDERED AT ALL!

Yes, the situation is such that people have only recently started to think about wild animals. The spread of infections in the opposite direction (from humans to animals) has not been studied. Everyone has always just ignored it! There is no separate specialized term for the spread of infections from humans to animals. But I will continue to call such spread 'anthroponoses.'

So, when scientists recently became interested in the spread of infections from humans to animals, they discovered that there are far more anthroponoses than zoonoses! People infect wild animals much more often than animals infect people!

Genome research has shown that humans transmit more viruses to animals than they receive from animals! This is data from a new large-scale analysis of viral genomes conducted by researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles. Scientists analyzed all publicly available viral genome sequences to reconstruct where viruses 'jumped' from one host to another species of living organisms.

Humans have usually been considered 'victims' of viruses, not a source. The transmission of viruses from humans to animals has always received much less attention. Therefore, the described study is one of the first large-scale works on the transmission of 'humanized' viruses to animals.

In the study, the research team developed and applied methodological tools to analyze nearly 12 million viral genomes currently stored in publicly accessible databases. Using this data, they reconstructed the evolutionary history and past host transitions of viruses in 32 viral families and identified which parts of viral genomes acquired mutations during the transition to new hosts.

Scientists have discovered that there are about twice as many virus transmissions from humans to other animals (anthroponosis) than the other way around. This pattern was consistent across most of the viral families studied.

The team's work highlights the important and largely underestimated fact that human viruses are often transmitted from humans to wild and domestic animals. We simply never paid attention to this!

Co-author of the study, Professor Francois Balloux (Institute of Genetics, University of California, Los Angeles), says:

… "we should view humans as just one node in a vast network of hosts endlessly exchanging pathogens, rather than as a 'sink' for zoonoses."

> "By studying and tracking virus transmission between animals and humans in any direction, we can better understand the evolution of viruses and, hopefully, be more prepared for future outbreaks and epidemics of new diseases, while also aiding conservation efforts."

I find the scientist's idea almost revolutionary: … "we should view humans as just one node in a vast network (of infection spread)" … At the very least, this is a

SYSTEMIC approach!

Once again, two simple conclusions based on fresh scientific data:

FIRST — humans transmit infections to animals twice as much as they receive from animals.

SECOND — the issue of infections transmitted from humans to wild animals is virtually unexplored. No one has ever been interested in this!

Currently, governments, along with commercial corporations, are rushing into the last remote natural ecosystems. This is happening simultaneously in our country and in others. They are creating tourist clusters in remote, until recently, inaccessible areas, with an increasing flow of tourists.

At the same time, "hunting reserves" are expanding. Simple "reserves" are being turned, by any means necessary, into "hunting reserves" or "national parks." The idea is to substitute concepts and legally allow tourism and hunting in areas where it was previously prohibited. Formally, these remain "Specially Protected Natural Areas" (SPNA). But in reality, only the name remains! The protective status is being reduced contrary to, for example, Russian legislation, which still prohibits this.

A separate issue is the deliberate creation of a synanthropic (human-dependent) animal population. This leads to an increasing spread of infections from humans into the wild through domestic or semi-domestic animals, which are being forced into wild animal populations under various pretexts!

This is the creation of hunting grounds with semi-free-range animals. Essentially, it involves raising wild animals specifically for hunters to kill, artificially, like domestic animals.

And this is supposedly "animal rights protection," where under the guise of such "protection," packs of feral dogs are created and artificially maintained on the outskirts of settlements.

The consequences are unknown. But it can be assumed that such consequences could be devastating for wild species still inhabiting the last corners of the wild.

The main point I am trying to convey to the reader is that any such consequences are a boomerang!

By thoughtlessly opening the door to anthroponoses, we automatically create new types of zoonoses. In the near future, these could start spreading back to us, humans, in cities. From where we are now persistently and quite consciously dragging strains, including drug-resistant

hospital infections, to wild animals in natural ecosystems. And these could become real epidemics, not fake infections currently used to destroy livestock in people's private farms and ensure a monopoly on agriculture for states and corporations.

Chapter 37. Scientific petition to protect wolves (USA)

I often mention the situation with wolves in the United States because they were essentially wiped out there before anywhere else in the world. Now, ecological degradation is breaking records, and stopping it is impossible due to the extermination of a key species! This triggered a union of scientists and the public to protect wolves, who began trying to reintroduce them into the wild.

And the unyielding bureaucratic machine is doing its utmost to finish off the last wolves! Along with them, they'd probably like to finish off the scientists and activists too. They would if the law allowed it. For now.

In 2010, scientists across the U.S. united to create a major scientific petition to the government for the reintroduction of wolves into the wild. Using scientific justifications, evidence, and numerous research studies, scientists declared: tens of thousands of gray wolves need to be returned to U.S. forests. A smaller population

won't stop ecological degradation! A truly large-scale effort is needed to return these natural caretakers to local biogeocenoses. This is essential for the recovery and restoration of lost and degrading ecosystems!

The scientists submitted the petition to the federal government. They focused on the successful experience of reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone National Park.

The initiative to create the petition came from biologists at the Center for Biological Diversity in Arizona. At that time, they stated that a few isolated wolf packs in the wild are NOT ENOUGH TO MAINTAIN ECOSYSTEM HEALTH.

“If the gray wolf is listed as endangered, it should be restored across all significant parts of its range, not just fragments,” says petition author and lead specialist Michael Robinson. According to him, wolves occupy less than 5% of their historical range across the U.S. In other words, people have practically driven all wolves out of the wild and continue to lobby for the extermination of the last individuals!

In theory, the scientific petition should have passed through the government. The fact is, under the Federal Administrative Procedure Act, petitions can be submitted to authorities if any wild animal species are in

danger.

In response to the petition, the authorities said something like, “we’ll think about it.” Chris Tollefson, a representative of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said they would study where and when wolves lived and maybe conduct some kind of review.

Another similar petition from scientists was in 2008, when the Natural Resources Defense Council also approached the Wildlife Service. But they were “kicked out” even faster, with a statement that restoring wolf packs would be “discretionary.”

So, did the wolf advocates achieve anything with their petitions?

Yes, partially, locally. All the victories for wolf protection in the U.S. that I described in the book were achieved only thanks to the efforts of the public and scientists, through scientific petitions and the tireless work of specialists.

It's tough for wolves everywhere, even after restoration. They are constantly being targeted! I want to quote David Mech, a senior scientist at the U.S. Geological Survey and a wolf expert.

“In areas where they are unacceptable, they will be destroyed — at least illegally.”

In our country, in Russia, we also launched a petition to protect wolves. We were the first to dare to publicly declare that wolves have the right to live! At that moment, I faced immense pressure from the authorities and the vast hunting community for my wildlife protection activities.

At that time, there were officially over 5 million active hunters in Russia, including high-status hunting lobbyists in power, wealthy individuals, and law enforcement. On numerous platforms, they collectively began to discredit our activities and called for action against us because of our stance on wolves.

The immense pressure was unbearable, which is why the petition to protect wolves was later closed. We couldn't find support from civil society, the authorities, or even basic funding for our activities.

It turned out that society was completely unaware of what was happening with wolves, and people simply had no idea about the importance of wolves in the wild. Meanwhile, for decades, people were fed only negative images of wolves: a gray beast undeserving of life. A parasite that must be exterminated!

Therefore, I decided to temporarily change the strategy for protecting wolves. I closed the petition (we gathered over 300,000 signatures) and launched the informational project “Russian Wolf” instead. We developed a website to disseminate and promote accurate information about wolves, and I began working on this book, which you are now reading.

The book will allow us to convey the importance of protecting wolves in simple language, to share the wolves' plight, and to tell what is happening with the caretakers of the wild!

I also preserved the text of our petition. I want to publish it as a separate chapter in the book! When we build a strong civil society and gain the support of the academic community, the petition to protect wolves will be reopened.

Chapter 38. Petition to protect the Russian wolf

PETITION TO PROTECT THE RUSSIAN WOLF.

(On the necessity of a special program for monitoring and regulating the Russian wolf population.)

This Petition has been created to draw the attention of government authorities to the need for special measures regarding the wolf population in the country.

THE ESSENCE OF THE PROBLEM

— THERE IS NO QUALITY MONITORING OF THE WOLF POPULATION IN THE COUNTRY.

— Monitoring is conducted through indirect signs: reports from game management workers or hunters; the number of wolves hunted; estimated environmental capacity based on food resources, etc. This includes using the “number of wolf attacks on domestic animals” from citizen reports and media materials in the quantitative monitoring of the wolf population.

— Migrations and the nomadic lifestyle of packs are not properly accounted for. As a result, the same pack is counted two or three times in two or three regions. Consequently, the wolf population is overestimated by two to three times.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WOLF IN BIOCENOSES (ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS) IS UNDERESTIMATED (ERRONEOUSLY ASSESSED).

— The wolf is traditionally (due to outdated perceptions) viewed as “absolute evil.” This is incorrect. From a scientific standpoint, the wolf is a necessary element of biocenosis self-regulation. The biased view of the wolf as a “gray bandit” deserving total extermination is based not on facts but on human psychology and mythology.

— The assessment of the wolf as a carrier of infections or parasitic diseases is biased and incorrect. In cases of rabies, foxes and raccoon dogs rank first. Rabies in wolves is extremely rare. Infection with parasites is significantly more common in bears, for example, than in wolves.

— The real situation is the opposite: the wolf plays a huge role in reducing the number of zoonotic infections. It regulates the populations of mice and marmots. It drives out and eliminates jackals in its territory. It

destroys sick and weakened animals.

3. THE NATURAL (WILD) POPULATION OF WOLVES IS BEING SYSTEMATICALLY EXTERMINATED.

AS A DIRECT RESULT, A SECONDARY SYNANTHROPIC (HUMAN-ASSOCIATED) WOLF POPULATION WITH ATYPICAL BEHAVIOR HAS FORMED, LIVING NEAR SETTLEMENTS.

— The wolf is classified as a “regulated species.” For example, like the jackal. But unlike the jackal, the wolf is considered a prized hunting trophy. As a result, wolves are hunted for trophies. Technical means are actively used. Snowmobiles in the northern tundra regions and southern steppes. Helicopters in the mountains. The natural wolf population in remote regions is mercilessly and uncontrollably exterminated.

— The remnants of wolf packs cannot live in their usual territories. The young do not have time to acquire survival skills in the wild. This has already pushed such wolves from traditional habitats to the outskirts of settlements. A synanthropic (human-associated) secondary population has formed. Wolves begin to feed at dumps alongside stray dogs and jackals, which was not observed until recently. There are even cases of wolf-dog hybrids with behavior completely

uncharacteristic of wild wolves.

— Additionally, humans are actively hybridizing wolves with dogs intentionally, for commercial interests. There are cases where such half-wolves escape from various “home zoos.”

— As a result, there has indeed been an increase in wolf attacks on dogs within settlements. This, in turn, leads to media hype and increased programs for wolf extermination. Some regions have even made decisions to completely eradicate wolves.

4. AS A RESULT, THE “WILD” WOLF POPULATION IS ON THE VERGE OF COMPLETE DESTRUCTION.

In the situation of:

— lack of objective monitoring;

— lack of distinction between wild and synanthropic wolf populations;

— decisions by regional authorities of individual Federation subjects to exterminate wolves, not synchronized with each other and not assessed on a national or even interregional scale — there is a very high risk of destroying the entire wild wolf population.

PROPOSALS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM:

IT IS NECESSARY TO CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE TARGET PROGRAM “RUSSIAN WOLF” UNDER THE MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES OF RUSSIA, COVERING THE ENTIRE COUNTRY.

1. A UNIFIED CENTER FOR WOLF POPULATION STATISTICS AND ASSESSMENT.

2. A UNIFIED METHODOLOGICAL CENTER FOR WOLVES.

Currently, there are individual specialists studying wolves. For example, in the Caucasus or Karelia. But this experience needs to be generalized, systematized, and used to train wolf specialists for ALL regions where wolves live.

3. URGENT STUDY OF SYNANTHROPIC WOLF POPULATIONS.

The emergence of "humanized" wolf populations near populated areas is likely a recent development. At the very least, there is a lack of sufficient research. It is necessary to, as soon as possible:

— identify "wild" wolf populations and place them under protection.

— assess the behavior of synanthropic populations, the reasons and characteristics of their formation, and address the issue of regulating the numbers of these synanthropic populations while PRESERVING AND PROTECTING THE WILD WOLF.

These are URGENT tasks that need to be addressed as soon as possible.

Otherwise, we will witness the destruction of the wild Russian wolf, alongside the growth of synanthropic populations of pseudo-wolves on the outskirts of populated areas.

We will lose not only the genotype of the Russian wolf.

A distinctive feature of the wolf is that it is a fairly social predator. Young wolves are taught, and knowledge is passed from generation to generation. This solidifies behavior patterns, hunting skills, and territorial "hunting grounds."

THE RUSSIAN WOLF IS NOT "EVIL IN A GRAY COAT."

THE RUSSIAN WOLF is a serious predator, needing preservation no less than the tiger, leopard, or bear. The wolf occupies its NECESSARY place in the ecosystem.

And a completely separate, yet important issue is that for many, THE RUSSIAN WOLF is no less a significant symbol of the country than the bear.

Chapter 39. The power of one

Can one person change the world?

And can a lone wolf change the world?

Now, I want to tell you a true story about a solitary figure. The example is truly impressive!

This is the story of how a lone immigrant wolf revitalized an entire forest ecosystem in a region.

In 1997, a solitary young wolf crossed an ice bridge that briefly connected Canada with the remote Isle Royale, located off the coast of Michigan on Lake Superior in the USA. The island is quite large and known for its rich biodiversity.

The young Viking in a gray coat stood out with his slightly lighter color compared to his more southern counterparts, in whose territory he found himself. And, presumably, with the character of a conqueror, since he dared to embark on such a distant journey.

His arrival revitalized the struggling wolf population, which had suffered from disease and inbreeding. This triggered cascading effects that improved the health of

the entire forest ecosystem.

Inbreeding (from English inbreeding, from in "inside" + breeding "breeding") is a form of homogamy, the crossing of closely related forms within a single population of organisms.

The term "inbreeding" is usually used in relation to animals; it is also used to describe the result of close-relative marriages among aristocratic families.

Inbreeding is a system of mating related individuals. Offspring have a high level of homozygosity, low variability of traits, and reduced viability. Incest is a pronounced form of inbreeding, where mating occurs between individuals directly related.

"Issues like inbreeding and low genetic diversity are of serious concern to scientists," —

says Sarah Hoy, an ecologist from Michigan Technological University, —

> "But this is the first study showing that when you have these genetic problems, they affect not only a specific population and increase its risk of extinction: they also have a really strong impact on all other species."

The history of wolves on Isle Royale is as follows: the first wolves arrived on the island in the late 1940s. Their main prey on the island is moose. And now the study of the wolf's impact on the natural ecosystem is the longest-running predator-prey study in the world.

By the 1980s, wolves on the island were in trouble due to the spread of canine parvovirus, which reduced their numbers from 50 to about 12 individuals.

Although the disease eventually disappeared, the population did not recover immediately. The reason was the onset of serious inbreeding in the small population, which led to reduced reproductive success and deteriorating health of the wolves. Offspring began to appear with defects: scientists started recording spinal deformities in wolf pups, previously observed in some dog breeds.

"If you're a wild wolf and you have to hunt prey, like a moose that's eight times your size, it can make life in the wild really tough," explains Sarah Hoy.

But everything began to change with the arrival of the young immigrant from the north. In official documents, after identification by scientists, this wolf was given the number "M93." But people immediately gave him the affectionate nickname "Old Gray Guy" for the light

(gray) color of his coat.

The "Gray" newcomer was not related to the existing population. He was also unusually large — a big advantage in defending territory from rivals or hunting hoofed animals weighing 800 pounds or more.

He easily became the leader of one of the three wolf packs on the island. Scientists estimated that "Gray" fathered 34 wolf pups. These pups, in turn, grew noticeably larger and without any pathologies. The genetics of the wolf population not only renewed but also improved significantly in quality.

This, in turn, restored the balance of the ecological system as a whole.

Moose are voracious herbivores, consuming up to 30 pounds (14 kilograms) of vegetation a day. The reduced wolf population on the island allowed the moose numbers to increase, which sharply reduced the young growth of trees on the island. Balsam fir was the first to suffer.

The arrival of "Gray" normalized the moose population again. With the decrease in moose numbers, trees began to grow at rates unseen for decades, which is vital for forest renewal.

But the benefits brought by the arrival of the new wolf lasted only about ten years. Then the situation worsened again — ironically, due to his exceptional reproductive success.

By 2008, two years after his death, 60 percent of the wolf population's gene pool was inherited from "Gray." This again led to a decline in genetic diversity in the population.

"Gray" himself began mating with his daughter after the death of his first mate. The renewed inbreeding with another member of the same family caused a rapid population decline until 2015, when only two wolves remained: a father-daughter pair who were also half-siblings.

William Ripple, a professor of ecology at Oregon State University, says this is an "important study" that advances understanding, "showing that genetic processes can limit the ecological impact of a keystone species — the gray wolf."

Chapter 40. The complexity of living systems: another illustration of the wolf's impact on biodiversity

Moose eat plants; wolves kill moose. What significance does this classic predator-prey interaction have for biodiversity?

I came across a major study by scientists from Michigan Technological University in the November 2009 issue of the journal "Ecology," detailing the intricacies of such predator-prey relationships in natural ecological systems.

The scientists show how the carcasses of moose killed by wolves in Isle Royale National Park enrich the soil in "hotspots" of forest fertility around the slain animals, triggering rapid growth of microbes and fungi that provide plants in the area with a wealth of nutrients.

"This study demonstrates an unforeseen connection between the hunting behavior of the apex predator—the wolf—and biochemical hotspots in the landscape,"

says Bump, an associate professor at the School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science at Michigan Technological University,

> "This is important because it highlights another contribution of large predators to the ecosystem in which they live, and illustrates what might be protected or lost with the conservation or eradication of predators."

— Bump and his colleagues studied a 50-year report on more than 3,600 moose carcasses on Isle Royale.

— They measured levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium in the soil at paired sites with moose carcasses killed by wolves and at empty control sites.

— They also analyzed microbes and fungi in the soil, as well as the leaf tissues of the large-leaved aster, a common native plant consumed by moose in the eastern and central parts of North America.

— They found that soils at carcass burial sites contained 100–600 percent more inorganic nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium than the soil at surrounding control sites. The burial sites also had, on average, 38 percent more bacterial and fungal fatty acids, indicating increased bacterial and fungal growth.

— The nitrogen level in plants growing at carcass sites was 25–47 percent higher than at control sites.

Now, even more interesting points with less obvious connections begin!

— Since large herbivores like moose are attracted to nitrogen-rich plants, carcass burial sites become feeding grounds, further enriching the soil with nutrients from the urine and feces of the animals feeding there.

"There is a secondary enrichment of the soil with fertilizers (the feces of grazing herbivores) precisely in those areas where the soil has already been enriched with organic nutrients from the carcasses of animals killed by predators."

"Initially, I was skeptical that something as common as nutrients from dead animals could be found in the forest floor,"

says Peterson, a zoologist who has been studying the wolves and moose of Isle Royale for decades,

"It was gratifying to see how animal-derived nutrients returned to the plants, enriching them with protein ready for consumption again."

Even moose killed in winter and mostly consumed entirely by predators create significant "nutrient pollution" hotspots, the study's authors conclude. They call these areas "fertility hotspots" and quantitatively demonstrate their importance to the entire ecosystem.

"On a landscape scale, long-term patterns of carcass deposition can influence forest dynamics by altering the competitive relationships among tree seedlings through changes in nutrient concentrations in their growing environment,"

meaning the very appearance of the grown forest, according to the researchers, is directly linked to the predators and other animals inhabiting the area.

This is not the first such study. The same group of specialists observed similar effects on soil and plant life in areas with moose carcasses in Yellowstone National Park, another place where wolves are apex predators and large herbivores are their prey.

Similar studies were also conducted in the Arctic tundra, where soil nutrients are severely limited. Scientists found that the impact of a musk ox carcass on the surrounding vegetation remains significant even decades later.

"Predation and nutrient cycling are two of the most important ecological processes, yet they seem almost entirely unrelated,"

says Vucetich, another author of the scientific paper,

> "The study allowed us to understand how these two seemingly incomparable processes—predation and nutrient cycling—are actually connected, and in the most fascinating way."

Scientists point out that the strong and unexpected connections between wolves, moose, and the biogeochemistry of their ecosystem are important for policymakers in regions dealing with predator control and lobbying for the extermination of wolves as "pests." Such an approach, scientists believe, is not only outdated and inconsistent with the modern understanding of the complexity of natural biocenoses but also extremely dangerous for the future."

Chapter 41. Humans provoke the breakup of wolf packs

In 2023, wolf researchers from Yellowstone Park, where wolf packs had previously been restored, published a new scientific paper in the prestigious journal "Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment."

The specialists were able to prove that wolf mortality caused by humans leads to further consequences in the form of instability within wolf packs.

The research team was led by Kira Cassidy, a research associate at Yellowstone National Park itself. Additionally, representatives from many other national parks and wolf protection organizations participated in the study.

Let me quote Kira Cassidy herself so you can understand the purpose of the study:

> "For gray wolves, the biological unit is the pack or family. We wanted to focus on the impact of human-caused mortality on the pack, which is a more

> localized indicator than population size or growth rates <...> We found that the likelihood of a pack surviving and reproducing decreases with a higher number of human-caused deaths."

So, what makes this study unique?

The fact is, previous scientists considered the overall impact of humans on wolf populations, while this new study examined how specifically human-caused mortality affects individual wolf packs.

That is, what exactly happens within wolf packs after the death of even one wolf. Specialists also monitored other packs at the same time, where no wolves had died! They then overlaid the research results and assessed the dynamics of changes between them.

This is truly a massive undertaking that requires significant time and effort! But the results demonstrate long-term changes within wolf packs.

As for us? There's the fact "a wolf died," but no one talks about what this will lead to next. And there's simply no understanding of long-term processes.

This lack of understanding exists even among many scientists, because they also view the problem from the perspective of "the loss of a single wolf" from

ecosystems. But in nature, everything is closely interconnected, and any "removal" of important parts from ecosystems inevitably leads to tragic consequences. Typically, it results in the rapid degradation of biogeocenoses and chronic diseases.

So, what did scientists learn from the study?

The most important finding: after the death of even one wolf in a pack, the likelihood of the pack surviving until the end of the year decreases by 27%. That is, if even one wolf dies due to human actions, the risk of the pack breaking up within a few months increases!

Additionally, it was found that the pack's ability to reproduce drops by 22%.

And this concerns the death of an ordinary wolf in the pack! Specialists say that if the leader dies, it's much more tragic: the likelihood of the pack surviving until the end of the year drops by 73%, and further reproduction by 49%.

Scientists note that there are programs protecting wolves in national park territories! But this doesn't help at all, because wolves don't know boundaries and constantly roam over long distances. According to specialists who observed the wolves during the study, wolves spent 46% of their time outside protected areas.

Leaving national park territories, wolves are subjected to human killings, after which they return to the park as a broken pack.

Within a year after this, many packs break up. Reproduction declines. And if the leader is killed, which happens very often because people try to track down pack leaders, the survival of all remaining wolves in the pack sometimes drops to zero.

Moreover, scientists say the situation is the same in all national parks that participated in the study. So this is now a confirmed scientific fact!

It turns out that 53% of all wolf deaths in national parks are due to LEGAL hunting outside the park boundaries. Wolves leave, they are killed, and they return as broken packs that begin to disband and lose offspring.

Let me provide another interesting quote:

"Managing populations of wild animals that cross rigid federal and state property boundaries is not easy. Wolves don't know park boundaries," says Bump, a professor at the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of California.

This is the kind of study that was conducted by specialists. Have you ever heard anything like this from officials or hunters? Do you think they've ever

considered this?

I am convinced, from personal experience talking with them, that they have not.

It all boils down to the primitive "we need to kill wolves." In reality, killing one wolf in a pack provokes the breakup of the family, a drop in birth rates. After that, lone wolves try to find food, approach humans, which becomes an additional trigger for calls to kill even more wolves!

Chapter 42. How the return of lost species revives ecosystems

In recent years, scientists have increasingly highlighted the grim consequences of the destruction of natural ecosystems due to hunting, habitat destruction, and climate change.

However, there is also a substantial body of research showing that the restoration of so-called “keystone” species—those that have a significant impact on their surrounding environment—is crucial for the health of ecosystems and can lead to the self-restoration of the ecosystem as a whole.

HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES FROM NORTH AMERICA.

WOLVES

Despite the traditional respect indigenous communities had for wolves, European colonists who arrived in the 1600s launched widespread campaigns to exterminate wolves. This wasn’t always for their pelts. Wolves were deliberately and completely eradicated as a “harmful

species.”

By the mid-20th century, fewer than a thousand gray wolves remained in the United States, compared to at least a quarter of a million before colonization. This is the “footprint of the white man” on natural ecosystems everywhere. And it’s not just about wolves!

> 1,000 after and <250,000 before the total extermination of wolves!

The gray wolf population on the North American continent was reduced by more than 250 times! Europeans carried out a total genocide of wolves! And in the 20th century, the question of the species' complete extinction arose.

Extinction was prevented in the 1970s when lawmakers passed the Endangered Species Act, which helped revive the apex predator in parts of its former range.

Then, in the mid-1990s, the government relocated wolves from Canada and reintroduced them to Yellowstone National Park.

This provided a wealth of data that scientists are still working to understand.

In brief:

— Wolves reduced the elk population, preventing them from overgrazing vegetation that birds use for nesting and beavers use for dams. This triggered a phenomenon in the ecosystem known as a trophic cascade.

— The restored vegetation helped stop soil erosion in rivers, altering their course by reducing meandering.

— By building their dams, beavers also create deep ponds necessary for the survival of young fish and frogs.

— When hunting, wolves focus on weak and sick prey, ensuring the survival of the fittest and protecting the ecosystem from infectious disease epidemics. This, in turn, promotes biodiversity.

There are even completely unexpected effects from the reintroduction of wolves! It was recently discovered that wolves returned to Wisconsin keep deer away from roads, reducing vehicle collisions! Such an unexpected effect!

Current estimates suggest there are now over 6,000 gray wolves in the U.S. The main threat of the species' complete destruction has been temporarily halted. And a wealth of material has been gathered on the positive impact of the restored wolf population on ecosystems.

BUFFALO

The story of the American buffalo (better known as the bison) is a grim tale of the genocide of yet another animal species in the early United States.

It is estimated that their numbers dwindled from 30 million to just hundreds by the end of the 19th century. The U.S. government aimed to wipe out the Plains Indians, whose way of life depended on this animal.

“It was a deliberate genocide—to drive out the bison, drive out the Indians, and confine them to reservations,” says Cody Considine of the U.S. Nature Conservancy.

Bison are now part of the U.S. Nature Conservancy's prairie restoration program in Illinois. Bison were introduced here in 2014 and now number about a hundred individuals.

It's simple: the hooves of bison, foraging for food, churn and aerate the soil, further promoting plant growth and seed dispersal. Bison dung fertilizes the prairies. And, accumulating, all these effects shape the natural ecological system as a whole. Without bison, prairies degrade and die.

Currently, about 6,500 bison have been restored to their natural habitat, and a pilot program for their further restoration has been created. The total number of bison is now estimated at about 20,000. So, as with the wolf,

the threat of complete destruction has been lifted.

SEA OTTERS

As a dominant predator in the marine coastal environment, sea otters play an extremely important role in their ecosystem.

Historically, they ranged from Baja California along the West Coast to Alaska, Russia, and northern Japan. However, fur hunting in the 1700s and 1800s reduced their numbers, which once reached at least 300,000 individuals.

For a time, it was believed they were completely exterminated off the coast of California, but a small surviving population of about 50 individuals helped them partially recover, and today they number around 3,000.

Jess Fuji, the head of the sea otter program at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, explains that studies conducted in the 1970s on the Aleutian Islands showed that otters maintain the balance of kelp forests by keeping sea urchins, which graze on them, in check.

Over the past decade, more complex interactions have been identified. For example, the impact of otters on eels in the estuaries of California has been revealed. Here, sea otters control the crab population, which preserves more sea slugs that feed on algae,

maintaining better conditions for the eel population.

Eels are considered a "marine nursery" for young fish and also reduce erosion, which can lead to coastal flooding.

I have deliberately presented examples of the recovery of three different key species on the North American continent. As an example of the growing complexity of understanding the environment. As a certain development of the relationship between humans and the natural habitat from blunt consumerism to cooperation. From the senseless genocide of entire species to their restoration.

Chapter 43. Review of Russian scientists on wolves

We have many excellent specialists in Russia, top professionals in their fields. Unfortunately, they simply aren't heard; all their scientific work is diligently ignored. This is a huge problem because these specialists have no way to bring ecological issues to the public's attention! This, in turn, creates a massive knowledge gap among people who start to be swayed solely by emotional arguments.

For instance, when hunters show footage of wolves hunting for food and say, "See how terrifying they are! Tomorrow, wolves will eat your children." As a result, ordinary citizens, driven by emotion, begin to support the extermination of wolves.

If the extermination of wolves leads to the destruction of ecosystems and the degradation of biogeocenoses that have been stable for millennia, is the indifference of citizens complicity in global ecocide? Participation in a crime.

I believe that indifference is always complicity. Every person should make choices consciously, studying and understanding what they are choosing!

On the other hand, you can't blame people for the extermination of wolves because there is very little information, scientific data is "swept under the rug," and the available materials and studies are extremely fragmented. Understanding the problem is difficult; people can only work with unstable data that is publicly accessible.

That's precisely why I'm telling you about this in my book: to piece together the puzzle of wolf extermination and provide an overall picture of what's happening. After reading the book, if someone has received the information but still supports the extermination of wolves, that is full complicity in the crime! In a global act of ecocide.

In Russia, scientists simply aren't heard, even though many scientific works on wolves have been published in recent decades. I particularly remember an interesting review by Russian scientists titled "Review of Current Research on Wolves in Russia," published in 2022. It was conducted by Russian specialists from the A. N. Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution of the

Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow, Russia), along with scientist José Antonio from the Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx Zoo (New York, USA).

Unfortunately, few people know about their work, although it should be printed and on the desk of every official making decisions about wolf extermination in Russia. Every hunter who believes that wolves are "useless in nature" and need to be "urgently culled" should also read it.

The scientists gathered a vast array of research on wolves in Russia, both FOR and AGAINST their extermination. They meticulously studied and analyzed all this research to understand what is happening with wolves and the real state of understanding of the problem in society.

The scientists collected all the materials (research) piece by piece. The review covers studies published since the beginning of the 21st century! Specialists considered data on wolf density in regions (what data was available), management methods, and conflicts with people. They also studied information on dog domestication, disease spread, physiology, and popular genetics. Some studies included data on modern methodologies for studying wolves, including molecular

genetics, mathematical modeling, camera traps, and CPS telemetry.

In other words, the review of wolf research by scientists was thorough and comprehensive! The specialists were neither defenders of wolves nor supporters of their extermination. This means there was no biased attitude toward the problem.

I won't publish the entire review due to the vast amount of information, but I want to quote part of the introduction to the study:

"A review of all wolf research over the past two decades is beyond the scope of our work. Rather, we describe the main directions and general trends. We emphasize that in Soviet and then Russian society, attitudes toward wolves have always been very emotional. The overwhelming majority of hunters, game managers, and rural residents have a sharply negative attitude toward wolves. We analyzed issues of three popular hunting magazines in Russia for 2019 and 2020: 'Hunting and Hunting Grounds,' 'Hunting and Fishing,' and 'Hunter.' In 2019, out of 17 articles about wolves, 13 were categorically negative, 1 was positive, and 3 offered a scientifically grounded approach to assessment. In 2020, 10 publications were negative, one was positive, and 4

offered a scientifically grounded approach.

Assessing the role of the species in ecosystems and its economic impact is a very complex task requiring a comprehensive and objective approach and long-term consistent research. Unfortunately, this task has not yet been accomplished. However, wolves have always had a special status in the USSR and Russia. Often, negligence or simply the theft of livestock was covered up by alleged wolf predation. Unfortunately, recent data suggests that wolves remain 'scapegoats.'

Let me provide a few more quotes from the scientists' review.

> "Despite the fundamental ecological and social importance of wolf population dynamics and management, there is currently no strategy or action plan for population management, other than encouraging the killing of wolves and rewarding wolf pelts. At the same time, killing wolves may worsen the situation rather than improve it, while other methods of population control are more effective."

> "Despite the proven and effective management tools described above, there is a significant hunting lobby promoting other approaches: extending the hunting

> season, offering bounties for wolf pelts, and using currently banned traps and snares. Proponents of this approach consider wolves a 'pest species' and disregard the population structure of wolves, their social organization, and self-regulation mechanisms."
>
> "In 2018, the highest number of wolves was killed in Karelia (250), and the total population of this predator in the region recently decreased to 300–350 individuals. The high level of wolf harvesting is due to cash rewards for wolf pelts and reduced fees for hunting hoofed animals."

I want to highlight information from scientists about rabies incidence in wolves. Officials and hunters actively justify the extermination of these custodians of the wild by claiming that "wolves spread diseases." I've mentioned this before.

Here's what Russian scientists have to say on this matter, I quote:

> "Despite the rare occurrence of rabies in wolves compared to the red fox, wolves are still carriers of this disease. For example, in 2013, 19 cases of rabies among wolves were recorded in Russia. In Central Russia, in the Lipetsk, Moscow, Tver, and Yaroslavl

> regions, 5 cases of rabies among wolves were recorded, or 0.5% of all cases (N = 1089 animals). In the Tver region, the most frequent rabies hosts are raccoon dogs (39%), and wolves may contract rabies by hunting raccoon dogs."

The first thing scientists say after examining a vast array of scientific data is that rabies in wolves is extremely rare!

Second, in 2013, only 19 cases of rabies in wolves were recorded.

Is this as catastrophic as officials present it, urging the killing of as many wolves as possible? Or is it a demonstrative display of 'inflated hysteria,' under the guise of which an open act of ecocide against Russia's wildlife is being committed?

Next, I definitely want to highlight a quote about the spread of diseases by invasive species:

> "Recently, there has been a shift from natural (autochthonous) foci and carriers of the disease to synanthropic ones, with feral dogs and cats as the main source of infection."

In the conclusion of the review, scientists point out that information about wolves, as well as the work of scientists, is extremely inaccessible. Moreover, the results of Russian scientists' work do not make it into international scientific databases, creating a gap in knowledge about wolves for scientists worldwide!

The problem is that in Russia, no legislative work is being done to protect wolves at all. If the research of Russian scientists were open to the international community, the issue of wolf extermination would become a subject of public and scientific discussion! And the authorities would have to respond to it.

Quote from the review by Russian scientists on wolves (conclusion):

> "Among all the countries overlapping with the wolf's range, the Russian part of the wolf's range is the largest. Russian wolves inhabit almost everywhere, with minor exceptions such as large cities and some Arctic and Pacific islands. Wolves occupy various habitats and geographical zones. There are many gaps in our knowledge about wolves that need to be filled; the lack of deep understanding is the main obstacle to a comprehensive assessment of wolves' impact on diverse ecosystems."

These are the data from Russian scientists.

Hunters receive a bounty from the state for each wolf killed, as well as a personal 'status' interest. This includes the opportunity to assert themselves psychologically by showcasing the kills! Praise from society as 'heroes saving people from wolves' also adds an incentive to kill.

Officials demonstrate their work to society by showing 'rescue from the gray monsters,' while simultaneously receiving support from the multimillion-member hunting community (who will also vote for these officials in elections) and have the opportunity to allocate millions from the budget for 'fighting wolves.' This is an extremely uncontrolled sector where it is essentially impossible to track where and on what the budget money was spent.

Society lacks the necessary information, except for what is publicly available. And all that exists is usually hysteria about 'terrifying wolves.' Objective information is scattered and not properly highlighted! Research, heavy texts, and people don't read them at all.

Therefore, a review of wolf research by scientists is extremely important. It is a summary of all the existing real SCIENTIFIC data on wolves in Russia! A reliable

and credible tool for arguing the need to protect wolves at the legislative level.

Chapter 44. Opinion on the wolf: Nikolai Konstantinovich Zheleznov — Chukotka

In Russia, there aren't many scientists actively working to protect wolves. This endeavor is extremely unpopular due to pressure from the hunting community, the authorities, and society's indifference. Imagine a scientist who studies wolves and advocates for their protection! He spends decades doing incredibly difficult work without funding, without support, driven by personal initiative. He gathers evidence, makes scientific discoveries... and then he has to convey all of this to the public.

But how? He stands alone against millions who insist, "It can't be true, the wolf is a dreadful creature, not a guardian of the wild! Impale the wolf and all who dare defend it!" Meanwhile, people can't and won't read studies, examine scientific work, find information, or analyze it.

Unfortunately, this is the dire situation we find ourselves in, which is why specialists studying wolves are extremely cautious in their work and reflections. They MUST balance between those calling for the killing of wolves and the few advocating for the protection of the guardians of the Russian Taiga.

It's all very sad.

I want to tell you about the work of a great scientist who, through his own efforts, conducted numerous scientific studies to protect wild animals! This is our Russian specialist, who dedicated his life to the mission of protecting nature.

Nikolai Konstantinovich Zheleznov was born on March 2, 1936, in the Samara region. Pay special attention to the age of this scientist; he is of the old school.

He first arrived in Chukotka in 1970. In 1974, he enrolled in the All-Union Agricultural Institute. After graduating, he began working as a game manager at the Anadyr Biological Branch of the Institute of Biological Problems of the North.

In 1976, he organized his first winter expedition to study the snow sheep of the Koryak Highlands.

In the 1990s, he was instrumental in the establishment of the International Reserve "Beringia Park" and was its first director.

Listing Nikolai Konstantinovich Zheleznov's scientific degrees and titles would take a long time. There are many. What matters more to me is that he is a PRACTITIONER with vast experience! That's why I want to quote some points from his work concerning wolves.

The thoughts I found most important are highlighted in bold.

"When considering the wolf's interactions with other animal species, its prey, we perhaps only have a qualitatively general view of its traditionally negative role. For humans, this becomes immediately obvious and tangible. But we still don't know many of its quantitative direct and indirect connections in ecosystems in each region, especially in our country with widely varying natural and physical-geographical conditions, the revelation of which would help determine its positive or negative significance in the ecosystems of Northern Asia and the entire Far East.

THERE MUST BE A UNIFIED RESEARCH PROGRAM NOT ONLY FOR THE WOLF BUT ALSO FOR OTHER LARGE PREDATORS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT

ECOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AND REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AFFECTING THEIR POSITION IN THE NATURAL COMPLEXES OF EACH REGION.

And if, due to a lack of knowledge and methods of approach to its study, past attitudes toward the wolf can be forgiven, today's attitudes based on past perceptions and only through the sights of a hunting rifle, a scoped carbine, or shooting from helicopters cannot be forgiven.

THE WOLF IS A HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT BIOCOMPONENT OF NATURE, IN THE NATURAL HABITAT IT SIGNIFICANTLY DETERMINES THE OVERALL STATE OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN ALL ECOSYSTEMS WHERE IT LIVES.

In recent years, research on wolf behavior and its impact on wild and domestic animals has been conducted in many regions of our country. In the Magadan region and Chukotka, as well as in other administrative regions of Russia, this work is yet to be carried out on a broad scale.

And if, for example, wolves cause damage in Taimyr, it does not mean that this damage can be extrapolated to other natural zones and regions of the North and Far

East, as many scientists and specialists do in their monographs and articles, comparing the incomparable, without bothering to reveal the ecological features in the wolf's behavior in its interactions with its prey, which is completely unacceptable.

This article is naturally not in defense of the wolf, which, in my firm belief, possesses rational activity (see note below), but for whether it should live completely freely or with some restrictions, based on a broad scientific and comprehensive study of its ecological features. Today, we cannot use any unfounded conclusions and recommendations that supposedly can correctly solve the problem of the wolf's relationships in ecosystems. Moreover, the wolf, like other carnivorous animals lower in the hierarchical food pyramid than humans, must have its share of food from what humans selfishly take from nature.

According to Darmont et al., it is HUMANS who are the primary SUPERPREDATOR on our planet (Darmont et al., 2009). It is profoundly mistaken to see the extermination of this highly organized animal with rational activity as a panacea for all the woes in reindeer herding in the Russian North, livestock farming, and the country's hunting grounds.

THE WOLF IN OUR TIME, NOT AS A PREDATOR AND DIRECT COMPETITOR TO HUMANS, HAS THE RIGHT TO EXIST. AND IT'S TIME TO REMOVE IT FROM THE LIST OF NEGATIVE SPECIES AS A "HUMAN ENEMY."

Never in the 20th century did the precisely coordinated mechanism of a dynamically balanced, self-regulating ecological natural system exclude any biological component without human intervention or a planetary ecological catastrophe. This reflects the evolutionary rationale for the existence of every species in nature, including the wolf in this case.

Note:

Regarding the wolf's intellectual abilities, let me share an example of its behavior in a life-threatening situation.

In early October 1998, after receiving a report from reindeer herders about a pack of wolves near their herd, I was invited by the Chukotka State Hunting Inspection to participate in their culling. The airport had already called to confirm that the helicopter flight was scheduled for 11 a.m. The flight would take at least an hour and a half to reach the western foothills of the rugged Peuklney Ridge (translated from Chukchi as 'sharp knife') at the headwaters of the Northern Pekulneyveem River, requiring additional fuel tanks on

board. Three of us—two inspectors and I—flew to the location. I took the co-pilot's seat, being the most familiar with the area, while the inspectors each took a side of the helicopter.

As we approached the rocky mountains of the ridge, we spotted a pack of three wolves. They dashed out from the willow shrubs on the slope. Two wolves ran down towards the dense willow thickets, where they were quickly shot. It turned out they were a female and a young male. The third, a very large wolf, clearly a male, darted towards a row of rock pillars (stone columns several meters high) at the top of the mountain chain. The pilot followed the wolf's tracks to where it had disappeared.

The wolf's tracks in the upper part of the mountains towards the stone pillars ended abruptly. There was no snow on the ridge; the wind had blown it away. Twice the helicopter circled the pillars, but the wolf was not found. I spotted it on the second pass, standing upright, pressed tightly against the rocks, blending in with the color of the cliffs. On the third pass, I loudly told the pilot, "He's gone along the ridge, there's no snow, we'll waste time, and we're low on fuel." The pilot turned the helicopter away from the ridge and headed for the landing site. I sighed with relief, thinking, "This wolf

should not die but live to pass on its skills and experience in the struggle with humans for its life to future generations."

This is my assessment of the wolf as a highly organized animal with rational behavior in a critical life situation."

These are the thoughts of a Russian scientist, a person who professionally understands the complex interconnections of natural ecosystems and evaluates the role of the wolf in nature in terms of its IMPORTANCE in forming biogeocenoses.

Chapter 45. Wolves in Kyrgyzstan and attempts to ban hunting

Gradually, a strong societal response is forming worldwide, an immune reaction against environmental issues. I told you about what's happening in the USA, where people are rallying to protect wolves, and they've managed to achieve a partial return of these wild nature custodians. In Norway, locals are also actively fighting against government plans to exterminate wolves! Similar movements are appearing everywhere.

The main thing is that it shouldn't be too late. For instance, in the USA, wolf restoration programs began AFTER THEIR COMPLETE EXTERMINATION, when the cascading extinction of biogeocenoses had already started. The return of wolves partially slows down the ecosystem degradation process, but it doesn't fundamentally fix it! Now, efforts must focus not only on bringing back wolves but on fully assessing all environmental problems and finding comprehensive solutions. It's necessary to identify which species have started to go extinct due to the absence of wolves, and

then which plants, animals, insects, and birds depended on those species! We need a chronology of the entire extinction cascade, an assessment for each species.

In recent years, the situation with animal extermination has also worsened in Central Asia. I've talked about jackals in Kazakhstan. Now, I want to discuss the situation in the Kyrgyz Republic.

The fact is, Kyrgyzstan essentially serves as a refuge for wildlife in Central Asia, as it encompasses vast protected lands with complex mountain ecosystems. Here lie eternal glaciers that feed the vast majority of Central Asia's rivers! Such places must be placed under international protection to exclude ANY NEGATIVE HUMAN IMPACT ON LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS.

A few years ago, active societal resistance began in Kyrgyzstan, including officials in power, against the total extermination of wild animals. Members of the republic's legislative body, the Jogorku Kenesh (note: the name of the body), publicly advocated for a complete ban (moratorium) on sport hunting in the republic.

This is unusual because there's probably nowhere else in the world where a group of influential government representatives jointly develops a legislative proposal to protect wildlife of this nature. The bill was initiated back

in 2017 and was called “On the Ban of Hunting in the Kyrgyz Republic.” Officials proposed banning hunting until 2030.

However, they immediately made a CATASTROPHIC mistake by excluding predator protection from the bill. They stated that exceptions would be made for regulating the populations of wolves, foxes, and jackals.

Imagine having hundreds of thousands of hunters who are completely banned from hunting in the republic! Yet, they are allowed to kill wolves and foxes. What will happen next? Under any pretext, they will justify the “need to regulate” and will go on to kill on an unprecedented scale.

They will also kill other wild animals, BLAMING IT ON THE WOLVES, thereby provoking even more extermination of these wild nature custodians.

Despite the fact that representatives of the Jogorku Kenesh supported the bill, the Government of the republic and the relevant parliamentary committee opposed it.

Moreover, representatives of the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry claimed that the hunting ban would have the opposite effect. Allegedly, there would be more illegal hunting! They also pointed

out the importance of attracting even more foreign “hunting tourists” who come to the republic for “sport killings.”

The bill was reviewed on March 9, 2017, and after the first reading, it was sent to a vote.

The authors of the bill reiterated their position: there has been a critical decline in the number of wild animals over the past 20 years (scientifically confirmed by leading experts). Urgent radical measures are needed to protect the republic's biodiversity.

Meanwhile, one of the law's authors, Janar Akaev, emphasized that the hunting sector in the country is rapidly growing, and it's not just local hunters coming to kill, but foreigners as well. He believes that organizing hunts has become “a private profitable business for certain officials.”

Let me quote Janar Akaev:

> “You say that a hunting ban shouldn't be introduced. However, all three arguments are unsatisfactory. There is no basis for concern that the budget won't receive funds. Issuing licenses doesn't bring significant profit, and it also ends up in the pockets of certain officials or hunting estates. For

> insignificant money, we legally allow the shooting of animals whose numbers are declining. This is wrong. There are widespread online ads saying: come hunt in Kyrgyzstan, where hunting conditions are easy and inexpensive. If necessary, state environmental protection officials will assist. If we don't ban hunting seeing this situation, what will happen in the future?”

The squabble over animal protection in the republic has reached the highest level! That is, within the Government itself, an immune reaction is starting, where some people managing the system understand: just a little more, and the ecosystems will be irreversibly destroyed. We need to stop now!

That's why the authorities were forced to put the bill to a vote. However, for instance, the Chairman of the parliamentary bill on agrarian policy, water resources, ecology, and regional development, Aitmamat Nazarov, while submitting the bill for a vote, immediately urged all deputies NOT TO SUPPORT IT.

Such an open lobbying decision.

After that, there were years of legal battles, squabbles within the government and society, but the hunting lobby proved stronger. The ban on sport hunting was not

implemented.

And yet, people don't give up. In 2023, Kyrgyzstan took the next step in protecting wolves. Lawmakers attempted to ban wolf hunting at altitudes above 2,000 meters above sea level, essentially in mountainous areas! This way, lawmakers and activists tried to stop the extermination of wolves and provide them protection in the mountains, allowing wolf packs to escape from humans.

In addition to wolves, various other animal species were added to the list.

Following negotiations with the government, the Ministry of Nature of the republic supported the hunting ban on the listed animals... except for wolves.

I want to quote the words of Adis Madiev, head of the wildlife department of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology, and Technical Supervision of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

> "We are going to review the rules for issuing hunting permits for these animals. The fact is, there have been repeated instances where people obtained permits to shoot wolves but hunted other fauna, including rare species. We have a provision that

> financially incentivizes citizens to hunt wolves to ensure the protection of human life and health and to prevent damage to agriculture. Currently, they pay 6,000 soms for an adult animal and 1,500 for a pup."

They want to continue killing wolves, even offering bounties, financially motivating hunters to specifically target wolf packs!

This is the opinion of the official in charge of the wildlife department at the Ministry of Natural Resources. He is NOT a scientist or a specialist; his job is to ensure that wildlife generates revenue for the government! To keep the money flowing. Therefore, his opinion directly reflects the interests of the entire government of the republic.

What do real scientists say about this? Let me share a comment from Askar Davletbakov, head of the vertebrate animal laboratory at the Institute of Biology of the National Academy of Sciences.

> "We often see on social media how people, proud of themselves, post videos of killed wolves and pups. Others like them, and no one writes that it's cruel and wrong. You see, wolves play a crucial role in the

ecosystem. There's an example from Yellowstone Park, where after the wolves were exterminated, billions of dollars were invested over 80 years to preserve the ecosystem, but nothing worked. As soon as five wolves were introduced, nature restored itself. Here, they say wolves destroy livestock. Well, yes, that's their direct 'duty.' There are many ways to protect livestock from wolves, but people don't use them! Ten years ago, when wolf attacks on livestock increased in Kyrgyzstan, I went to the sites, and it always turned out that during the attacks, the shepherd was either asleep, drunk, or didn't go to herd the sheep because of bad weather. People don't do their jobs and blame the wolves for everything."

Just real opinions: THE OFFICIAL AND THE SCIENTIST. One views the problem from the perspective of 'economics and politics,' and the other objectively assesses it from a scientific standpoint.

In Central Asia, in a country that serves as a refuge for wildlife, there is a massive struggle to preserve the lives of wild animals. The government openly states its interests—they want to profit from 'hunting tourism' and attract foreigners eager to kill animals in the mountains.

This reflects the situation in the U.S., Russia, and any other country in the world. Self-serving interests... unfortunately, they are dividing the gray skin of the last wolf.

Chapter 46. The reason for the extermination of wolves is the degradation of the management system

It took me almost two years to write this book. During this time, I researched scientific works from scholars around the world, studying them meticulously, trying to understand the problem of wolf extermination. It turns out that while research exists, it is extremely fragmented, unknown to anyone, and often the hunting lobby in power prevents these studies from gaining wide exposure: they simply block them and restrict access. Many international scientific platforms also charge authors to publish their work, and since enthusiastic researchers are not funded, they lack the money to publicize their findings!

The opposite situation exists for those who have money. Typically, all research that breaks into the public sphere is initiated either by governments or large private companies. No one funds research out of a genuine

desire to make the world a better place; typically, only work within the 'necessary context' is funded, including politically.

And scientists need to eat, to feed their families, and they are essentially forced to gradually 'flow' from INDEPENDENT SCIENCE into MANAGED SCIENCE.

Thus, independent scientists are not heard. Meanwhile, society experiences a constant fear of wolves, actively supported by authorities and the hunting community! This fear is amplified, stirred up, and eventually, people themselves begin to show aggression towards wolves.

After studying all possible data, I identified three reasons used by lobbyists for wolf extermination:

1. Wolves attack people and infect them with rabies.

Commentary: attacks by rabid wolves on people are extremely rare, and documented cases are usually linked to wolves becoming accustomed to anthropogenic food sources. Diseases are almost always spread by packs of feral dogs and cats, transmitting them from humans to the wild! This is a reverse zoonosis.

The claim that wolves massively infect people with rabies is an outright lie! Global experts confirm that the situation is ACTUALLY THE OPPOSITE. Today, it is humans who create the risk of spreading dangerous

diseases to wild animals.

2. Wolves attack domestic animals and livestock, killing them in large numbers.

Commentary: scientists note the hybridization of wolves with dogs and the widespread presence of dog packs in the wild. They begin to inhabit areas around settlements, living near garbage dumps, and they are the ones that typically attack domestic animals! True wild wolves do this very rarely, and even then, the main reason is that people do not use existing effective methods to protect animals.

Moreover, experts unanimously confirm that losses of domestic livestock are often blamed on wolves! Thus, authorities extract money from taxpayers not only for the 'fight against the terrifying wolf' but also for compensating livestock owners. In reality, tracking where the money goes is impossible. This is essentially an uncontrolled process of budgetary money being written off!

There is proper modern control over predators, and there are proven effective methods for preventing conflicts between people and wolves, including in agriculture and pastoral livestock farming.

3. Wolves attack people and kill them.

Commentary: cases of wolves attacking people are extremely rare. Most often, wolf-dog hybrids and stray dogs attack, as they lack fear of humans due to hybridization! True wild wolves avoid people and attack only in extreme cases, usually caused by severe hunger, lack of food sources, or the inability to hunt wild animals due to broken packs (when hunters exterminate part of the pack, including leaders).

Meanwhile, any case of a wolf attacking a person is blown up into a massive hysteria in the media, provoking fear in society and leading to even more wolf killings.

These are the reasons; there are no others. It is on these three levers of pressure and manipulation that the hunting lobby worldwide relies, integrated into all spheres of government, actively pushing their vested interests by scaring the population with the 'terrifying wolf.'

What about reality?

People manage forests, cities, and have even recently learned to control the Earth's climate. Be sure to read about this in my book "Climate Weapon."

Humans have created artificial intelligence, developed an 'artificial sun' in China, and now major companies are competing in the development (and some already exist)

of quantum computers. Millions of cameras track people using facial recognition, biometrics, and algorithms process billions of data points every moment!

In the USA, a chip has been developed that can be implanted in the human brain to write text by thought alone, to control a computer just by 'thinking about it.' These chips are currently being tested to cure the most complex human diseases! They openly interact with nanotechnologies, including microscopic technical means embedded in the human body.

Driverless cars, spacecraft, metaverses, in the end!

All of this has been done, developed, and is already being rapidly integrated into our lives.

And amidst this diversity of achievements, technologies, and groundbreaking scientific discoveries... we're told they can't ensure the safety of livestock farmers and therefore must urgently 'cleanse' the wilderness of wolves?

When I openly spoke out in Russia against the extermination of wolves in Kamchatka, the regional Minister of Natural Resources lashed out at me on social media. The issue was that the authorities in Kamchatka had essentially turned the entire region into a "hunting ground," luring "tourists" to kill wild animals.

Meanwhile, they had very few wolves left, as the authorities themselves publicly admitted. Yet, officials recently removed limits and restrictions on wolf hunting and even increased the bounties for each wolf killed! They were motivating hunters to "cleanse" the region of wolves.

I spoke out against this, after which the head of the Ministry of Natural Resources posted on social media mocking the protection of wolves. He wrote something like: "Pavel Pashkov suggests using satellite monitoring, artificial intelligence, and GPS to protect wolves, haha."

...and this is the head of the Ministry of Natural Resources of an entire protected region of vast Russia!

I look at scientific research and see how such technologies have been successfully used for years to restore and monitor wolves. These excellent modern technical tools are laughed at by the person leading the Ministry's management.

In reality, this reflects a broader problem. It's about what's in the minds of those who make "responsible decisions" in the system of government administration! Worldwide.

We're talking about the protection of wolves. About the right of wild animals to live! We're talking about the complex interconnections in the wild, in biogeocenoses, where wolves play important biological roles.

Meanwhile, the heads of departments burst into hysterical laughter at the suggestion of using proven effective modern technical means to protect wolves.

And this is the whole problem of wolf extermination! If a scientist like Nikolai Konstantinovich Zheleznov-Chukotsky were in charge of wildlife management, we wouldn't have any problems with wolves.

The Russian Taiga would be under the protection of a nature-loving person, a professional in their important scientific field.

Letter to comrades

I want to express my immense gratitude to all our comrades, participants in wildlife protection projects, who help us and support our activities.

Initially, I wanted to thank each comrade by name, to publish a list of those who supported our work. But unfortunately, due to the changing political climate and the problems that could arise from speaking the "inconvenient" truth, it is now highly inadvisable to publicly announce the names of our supporters.

This is a matter of safety for each of us.

Therefore, I want to thank all our comrades with this letter, and express my sincere hope that there will be more of us and that we can change the world for the better!

Everyone who has supported my activities.

Everyone who stood by me in difficult times and didn’t let me fall.

Everyone who helps fight for the wild.



Researcher Pavel Pashkov

To everyone who, instead of a thousand words, WAS ALWAYS THERE!

To each of you, I express my personal gratitude. We are inextricably linked by close bonds of unity, ancient roots, the magic of true Living Nature!

After reading this book, understanding the depth of the problem of wolf extermination, go out into nature. Light a fire, brew some herbal tea! Spend the night in the embrace of Mother Earth. Think about what’s important, what’s ancient, what’s real. Think about how many like

you—defenders of nature—are in all corners of the planet. Think about the wolves. About our Gray Brothers!

And know, comrades, that thousands of such madmen, seekers, warriors of the Forest—will do the same! Our fires are far apart, but we are truly together.

Let’s continue the fight for Life! This is the path of the strong. The path of the free.

Eyes of the northern wolf

With the eyes of the northern wolf
Look into the distance today,
At the green shards,
At the taiga's sorrow.

Where our ancient forests
Once roared like an ocean,
There are no green giants—
Only stumps and emptiness.

Where wolves roamed freely
In packs for many years,
There are no birds, no beasts,
And those wolves are gone too.

The scattered fragments,
Like a skeleton picked clean:
Groves, clear-cuts, copses—
Memories of years gone by.

Their wolf howls don't disturb,
The bear's roar doesn't stir,
Only a hare might still

Dash here and there.
Where the free wolf pack's
Light tracks were lost in moss
There are no tracks. No sounds, no songs.
Nothing is left there anymore...

Only overgrown with weeds
Are the rusty barrel remains.
The former loggers' camp,
Where the taiga once was.

The icy wandering wind,
Traveler of the northern seas,
Howls over the expanse
Of endless stumps.

The Heavenly Wolf howls
A funeral lament over the taiga:
Where are you, cedars? Where are you, spruces?
Where is the silk of fir boughs?

With the gaze of the northern wolf
Look at yourselves:
How much is left to cut down
Before the entire taiga disappears?

WE ARE WOLVES

Wolf blood runs in my veins, though I’m weary from the chase,
I cannot surrender to the hunters!
Let the pack lead the pups far away—
Beyond the distant mountains, into the shelter of the taiga.

As for me—I’ll manage, though I’ve fallen on the run,
Though I’m coughing blood onto the white snow.
But the fight isn’t over; once again I survived,
Once again the hunter’s aim went astray.

Once more we’ll disappear into the Russian Taiga,
And let our sorrow dissolve in spring water.
Are you with us? We’re a pack, cheerful and brave,
Survivors once again of an unequal fight.

We are the free wolves of the Russian Taiga.
We are alive. They haven’t managed to kill us yet.
We have survived again. We will go on surviving,
And we will not let the Russian Taiga die!

Together, as a wolf pack, we'll enter
Another battle against the pack of dogs.
We are wolves. We are a pack. The blood of the Russian Taiga.
We will survive, and our enemies will regret it.
The taiga will shelter us and heal us;
The story of the Russian Wolf is not over.
We are a free pack of a free land;
Our enemies have never been able to break us!

And tomorrow we'll train the pups to face the hounds;
Wolf blood will boil in their veins as it does in ours.
We are here, in the wild reaches of the Russian Taiga,
And we have preserved the wolf's blood in our pups.

Dear Reader!

Thank you for reading this book! I distribute all my books for free, believing that this work belongs to society. I can continue the fight for Life only thanks to the support of people who have become part of our history.

Support my work with a donation, or leave your wishes or thoughts about the book at the link below.

I promise to continue the fight for Life, write new books, and unite people. Perhaps together we will achieve something great!

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