A close-up, high-resolution photograph of a wolf's head, showing its eye, ear, and fur texture. The wolf is looking slightly to the left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural habitat.

Wolves, Coyotes & Foxes

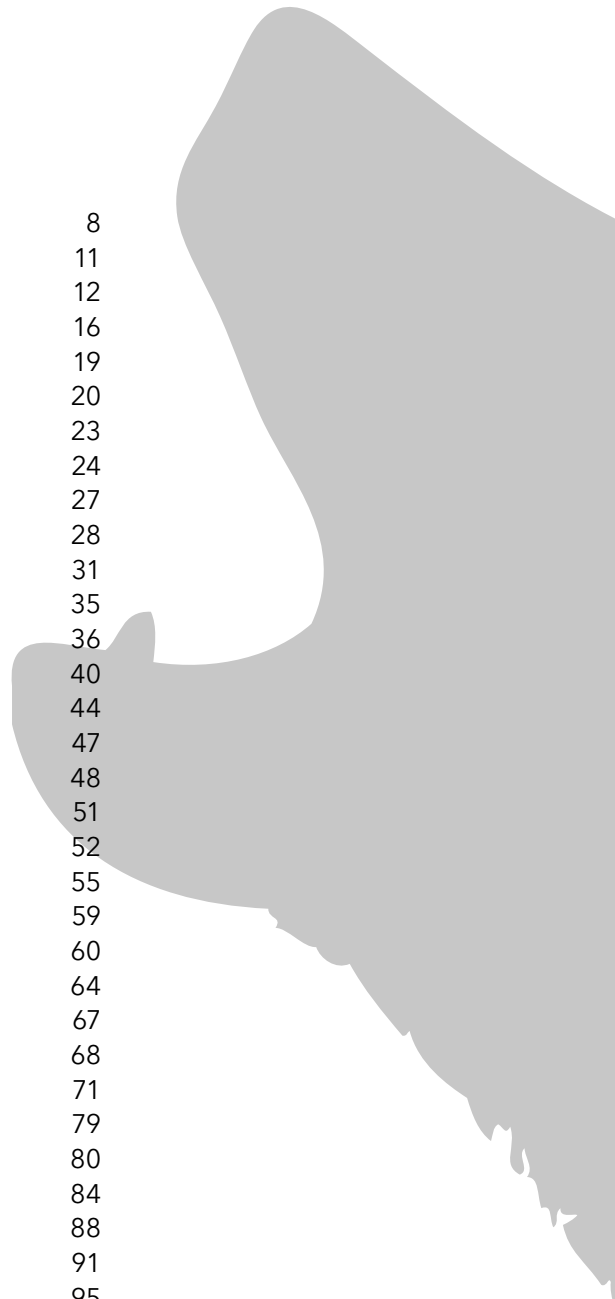
Symbols of the Wild

Written and Photographed by

STAN TEKIELA

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Wolves—a symbol of all things wild

Few animals in the wilderness elicit such strong emotions in people as the wolf. Wolves are loved by many who cherish wild places and intact ecosystems, but they are loathed by others who regard them as competition for natural resources.

I find wolves to be a symbol of all things wild—the epitome of wildness! I live in Minnesota, a state with more wolves than any other in the Lower 48. Living in close proximity to them makes me feel more connected to the wild, and for that I am grateful.

Wolves, along with coyotes and foxes, are a group of animals that I've always found fascinating throughout my career as an author, naturalist and wildlife photographer. I have been studying and photographing wolves in particular for more than three decades, but I still get excited each time I see one through my viewfinder. I suspect this will always be the case because they are, strangely enough, lovable, intelligent creatures—much like the many domestic dogs I've known.

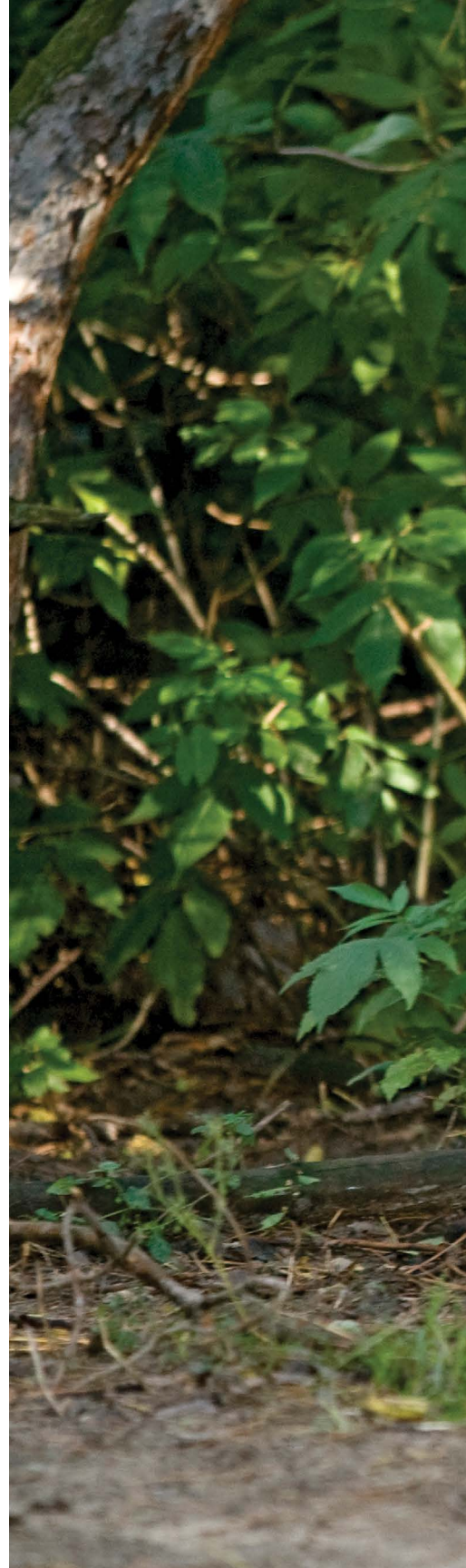
Stan Tekiela



Gray Wolf

Wolves around the world

Wolf and wolflike ancestors have been found on every continent except Antarctica. These large predators thrived in a wide range of habitats, from mountains and forests to deserts and prairies, and there was no place they couldn't find a home. They are Holarctic, which means they once occupied most of the Northern Hemisphere above 30 degrees north latitude. They roamed throughout Europe, the Middle East and south into Saudi Arabia. Wolves were also found in Russia, India and China. In North America they ranged across all Canadian provinces and American states and reached as far south as central Mexico. Unfortunately, they were eliminated from 99 percent of all regions. There are a few left in Russia, China, northern Spain and the mountains of Italy and Germany, but their numbers are greatly reduced.





Mexican Wolf



Coyote

Coyotes don't change much from region to region, with a few exceptions. Coyotes of the West and North tend to be slightly larger than those in the desert Southwest. While wolves range from all black to mixed shades to completely white, coyotes have little color variation and are usually some shade of gray or tan. Fur density corresponds to the climate of residence. Like wolves, coyotes in northern states tend to have thicker fur than those in southwestern states such as Arizona.

Eastern coyotes are relatively new. A slow, steady expansion of the range eastward has brought coyotes into every eastern state. These animals are standard in size and color.

Coyotes of southeastern Canada show remarkable variability. As you may recall, this is the region where some hybridization between wolves and coyotes has apparently occurred. Coyotes here tend to be larger and darker, appearing more like wolves, with smaller ears, wider heads and stocky bodies.

Foxes show all sorts of variability, not only from region to region, but also from individual to individual. There seems to be only slight regional correlation to color. For instance, Red Foxes on Isle Royale in Lake Superior tend to be very dark to nearly black. This is unlike other Red Foxes, which can be red to orange with gradients of color intensity. Many others are nearly gray or tan, and blond or yellowish foxes are not uncommon. No matter the color, the tip of a Red Fox's tail is always white. Gray Foxes have black-tipped tails, like wolves and coyotes.





Acute hearing

After smell, hearing is the next most important sense. Wolves are able to hear the howl of a pack mate up to 6 miles away in a forested region and as far as 10 miles out in open habitat.

Coyotes and foxes also have acute hearing. They can pinpoint a vole or other small mammal under several feet of snow and pounce on it with amazing accuracy. They will cock their head back and forth, focusing each ear on the sound. This process helps them identify both the horizontal and vertical positions of the noise. When these are established, they coil up and pounce on the unsuspecting critter.

The sight field

Much of what is known about the eyesight of wolves, coyotes and foxes is based on domestic dog sight—which is not like our sight. In people, there is a small depression in the back of each eye where all incoming light is focused. This region, called the fovea centralis, gives us the ability to focus sharply on objects in the far distance. Like domestic dogs, all wolves, coyotes and foxes lack this central focusing spot, so their clear vision in front is limited to about 100 feet. Also, their eyes are positioned toward the front of their heads, giving them three-dimensional (stereoscopic) vision. But even though their field of vision is about 180-200 degrees (which is slightly greater than in people), just a small portion of it is stereoscopic since their field of vision is directed more laterally. Because of the limited stereoscopy, these animals see as well as we do when an object is near or not too far away, but at longer distances their vision is diminished.



Coyote

Litter success

The average litter size for a healthy adult female wolf is 6 pups. The youngest documented female wolf to breed in the wild was 2 years of age, but most other young females just starting to reproduce are often unsuccessful the first time. They lack proper nutrition and also mating skill, since their pack usually consists of just themselves and their mate. As they age and get more experience, chances for success increase greatly.

Young coyote and fox mothers tend to have more success from the start than wolves. Coyotes produce 4-6 pups and Swift Foxes have up to 8 kits, while Red and Gray Foxes have as many as 10 kits. Foxes tend to live shorter lives than wolves and birth more young earlier in life, which is proportionate for their shorter life spans.



Wolves, Coyotes, Foxes . . . the Kings of the Canine World

Their beauty strikes us. Their mystique enchants us. Wolves, coyotes and foxes are beloved, appreciated and misunderstood. A sighting in nature is rare, which enhances our fascination with these animals. Feel that awe with every turn of the page in *Wolves, Coyotes & Foxes*. Award-winning author, naturalist and wildlife photographer Stan Tekiela presents stunning photographs and insightful descriptions of these canines' lives. The result is a book deserving of a place on any coffee table or shelf.

Give it a try. Open this book to any page, and prepare to be struck with wonder.



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