

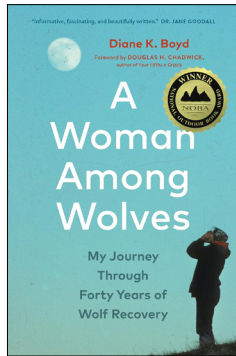
A Woman Among Wolves: My Journey through Forty Years of Wolf Recovery

By Diane K. Boyd. 2024. Greystone Books. 240 pages and 10 pages of black and white images, 34.95 CAD, Hardcover, 28.95 CAD, Paper. Also available as an E-book.

A Woman Among Wolves is an enjoyable book detailing Diane Boyd's 40-year career studying Gray Wolves (*Canis lupus*) that naturally re-colonized Montana from Canada. Readers will learn about the very first wolves that started this population—beginning with a lone female named Kishinena—and are taken up to the present day; about 1000 wolves now inhabit the state. Boyd's stories (and pictures) are captivating. This is her first book (although she has previously published scores of scientific papers), and it provides a unique perspective on the first wolves which returned to the United States' Rocky Mountains in 50+ years (15 years before they were reintroduced to Yellowstone). She was likely the first female to trap wolves for research purposes in North America (p. 18).

The book spans Boyd's life up to the present, but the relevant wolf story starts in 1977 in northern Minnesota and then, in 1979, moves to Montana and the Northern Rockies of the United States. It documents the resilience of wolves despite human efforts to undermine their recovery. For 18 years, Boyd and her colleagues studied wolves in the North Fork of the Flathead region of northern Montana and southeastern British Columbia in and around Glacier National Park. This study provides the background for most of the book, although Boyd dedicates later chapters to modern events, such as the politics associated with wolves and their population numbers. In general, it's a good blend of the past (i.e., her study) and present research and politics.

There are many fascinating accounts of Boyd and her colleagues following wolf tracks in the snow and fording frigid rivers in waders during the winter. There is also a nerve-racking scene when two drunk men approach her cabin at night (Chapter 5). But, the backbone of the book is the wolves, including Kishinena (Chapter 4), Sage (Chapter 6), Phyllis (Chapter 8), and others like feisty Wolf 8963—only half the weight of her larger mate (28 kg versus 55 kg) yet she survives to middle age before a hunter in British Columbia shoots her (p. 208). The hunter appreciates the wolf as it is the "most meaningful hunt" of his life (p. 208). Boyd respects his admiration for the canine despite not fully understanding his desire



to shoot and kill a wolf (pp. 208–209). I also liked the story of Wolf 8756, which the team captures five times and monitors for most of her 12.5-year life, the longest-lived wolf in the study (pp. 209–210).

My favourite chapter was Catch Me if You Can (Chapter 7), which describes the team's efforts to capture and radio-collar wolves. The wolves are very elusive, living in forested environments that make them difficult to follow, except in the winter when there is snow on the ground. Radio collars allow Boyd's team to track the wolves year-round. This section documents the capture of a large (51 kg) wolf named Ace and then a Grizzly Bear, which teaches Boyd to be more selective with placing traps and lures to avoid non-target animals (pp. 72–73). The descriptions are so good—I felt like I was there, next to Boyd, as she conducts field research. At one point, Boyd accidentally captures an adult female Cougar. I enjoyed reading about her appreciation for the animal that had "thick, strong forelegs ... an incredibly powerful [body] ... one of the most magnificent animals I had ever touched" (p. 75). I was interested to learn that Boyd typically only has about a dozen foothold traps out at a time (p. 78); I thought she would have many more set out during peak capture season (from late spring to early fall).

In another chapter, Boyd and a colleague capture a female wolf named Ice early one summer morning. They take off their shirts to heat the wolf; it had been cold and rainy, and the wolf is hypothermic. They keep the soggy animal in their truck with the heater on full blast until the wolf wakes up, and they have to push it out the driver's side door, over Boyd's lap (pp. 114–116). Boyd says, "Our sports bras [were] covered with black hair, [making us] look like we had slept with a gorilla" (p. 116). I laughed out loud after reading that passage.

The last few chapters cover modern times in the wolf world in both Montana and the Rocky Mountain West. These sections are less about Boyd's research and more about wolves and human society. They include important chapters (i.e., Chapter 13) that counter the 'super-wolf' argument in which the wolves that returned to the region are supposedly bigger than the original wolves that lived there before White men exterminated them in the early 1900s. Boyd provides data and stories of individual wolves, documenting how there is really one big (meta)population stretching from the northwestern United States to western Canada; she describes how wolves disperse to and from this interconnected region and how

they all look and act similarly (pp. 171–172). She also notes that despite human persecution, there are currently ~3000 wolves in the west (p. 174). However, there are disconcerting trends, including our illogical fear of wolves despite them being the least likely carnivore to attack humans (p. 182). She notes that wolves are often treated as a metaphor for government intrusion, because rural folks can be distrustful of the government and government personnel helping with wolf recovery. Thus, many people still use rhetoric seemingly out of the Dark Ages with their firmly entrenched prejudices against the predator (p. 191). Laws have been passed in Montana and Idaho to greatly reduce wolf populations with cruel methods like neck snares, night hunting over bait, and year-round hunting seasons with bounties (Chapters 15 and 16). Despite the negative things happening with wolves, Boyd finishes these two chapters noting, “Throughout all this turmoil, the wolves have persisted ... because of the wolf’s impressive resiliency” (p. 203).

This was an enjoyable, quick read despite it being over 200 pages. It is an important addition to an

already copious body of literature on wolves. Boyd describes the book as “a forty-year journey of one of the most successful endangered species recovery stories ... one where the world is much richer with wolves in it” (p. 211). She writes with great perspective and candour as one of the first women to study wolves.

I have only one small criticism. The map on p. iix depicts a very big region, extending into Canada, and is not specific to the North Fork and Glacier National Park area. While the area shows the locations where some of Boyd’s wolves dispersed to >800 km from her study site (e.g., female Wolf 8551; see p. 168), which helps dispel the ‘super-wolf’ argument (Chapter 13), I would have liked to see the arrows of those wolves’ movements on the map showing where they started and ended. Additional, localized maps related to where Boyd did the majority of her research would have been helpful too.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book.

JONATHAN (JON) WAY
Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research
Osterville, MA, USA