

## 2.12 Wolf (*Canis lupus: ssp: nubilus, occidentalis*)

### Appearance and Size

Wolves in British Columbia vary in colour. A single pack may contain animals that are black, white, shades of grey-brown and tan, but never spotted. Wolf colors vary widely, and solid-colored wolves are common. They are often a grizzled grey-brown, similar to some German



(Stock Photo)

shepherd dogs. A wolf's winter coat is very woolly, and can be two and one-half inches thick with individual hairs as long as five inches. Dogs descended from wolves; consequently, for some breeds, they appear similar. Wolves have longer legs, bigger feet, and a narrower chests than large domestic dogs. While a domestic dog's tail may curl, a wolf's tail does not.



(Photo: BC Parks)

### Life History

Wolves are social animals: they not only hunt in packs or groups but live most of their lives with other wolves. The wolves' habit of hunting in packs has resulted in the development of complex patterns of social behaviour. Wolves differ from domestic dogs in their reproductive cycles. Male dogs can breed at any time of year and females every six months, whereas both male and female wolves in the wild can breed only once a year. Wolves usually reach sexual maturity in their second year. It is possible for younger animals to have pups, but this is not normally the case. Breeding time varies with the latitude but most commonly occurs in March and April. After a nine-week gestation, litters of five or six pups (sometimes eight or more) are born. The pups remain inside



(Stock Photo)

whelping dens for approximately two weeks. By mid-autumn they are travelling with the pack and participating in hunting and other pack activities.



(Photo: Jim Peaco, US National Park Service)

## Abundance and Distribution

Wolves are territorial. The sizes of their territories vary greatly and are dependent on the kind and abundance of prey available. The pack bond is strongest during winter, when the wolves travel and hunt together. In summer, when the pups are young, the adults seldom go on long forays. They may hunt together occasionally after meeting at the den or home site where the pups are being cared for. Wolves are common in lightly settled portions of British Columbia. (Map 2.12)



Front track  
about 11 cm  
(4 1/2") long



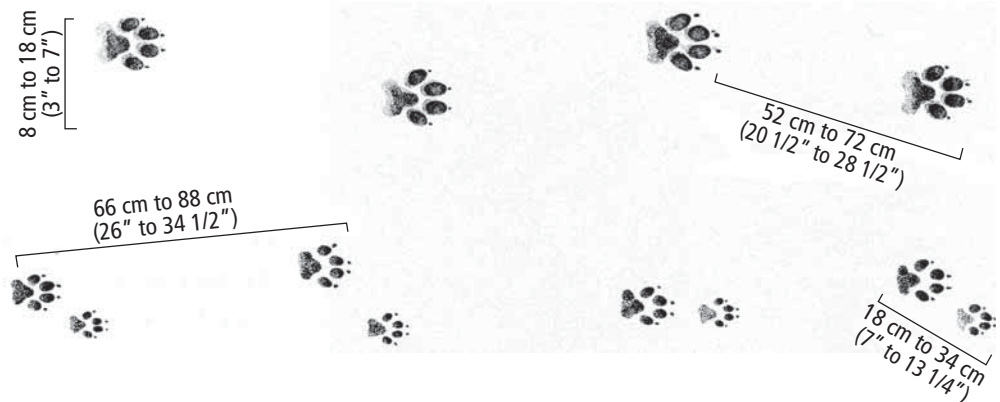
Hind track  
about 10 cm  
(3 3/4") long

Text and map adapted from:  
Canadian Wildlife Service,  
1993b and National Park Service,  
2004.



(Photo: Barry O'Neill, US National Park Service)

Wolves are mostly direct-registering animals in their alternating walking gait. Their trail width is usually wider than that of coyotes, but the two animals' stride lengths overlap substantially.



Gray wolves tend to leave irregular trotting patterns. The configuration of the tracks and their spacing within each group vary considerably. The smaller hind track leads the front track in each set of tracks.

Adapted from: McDougall (1997); and Sheldon and Hartson (1999).



(Photo: Colin Leake)

## Characteristic Features



(Photo: Leonard Sielecki, BCMoT)

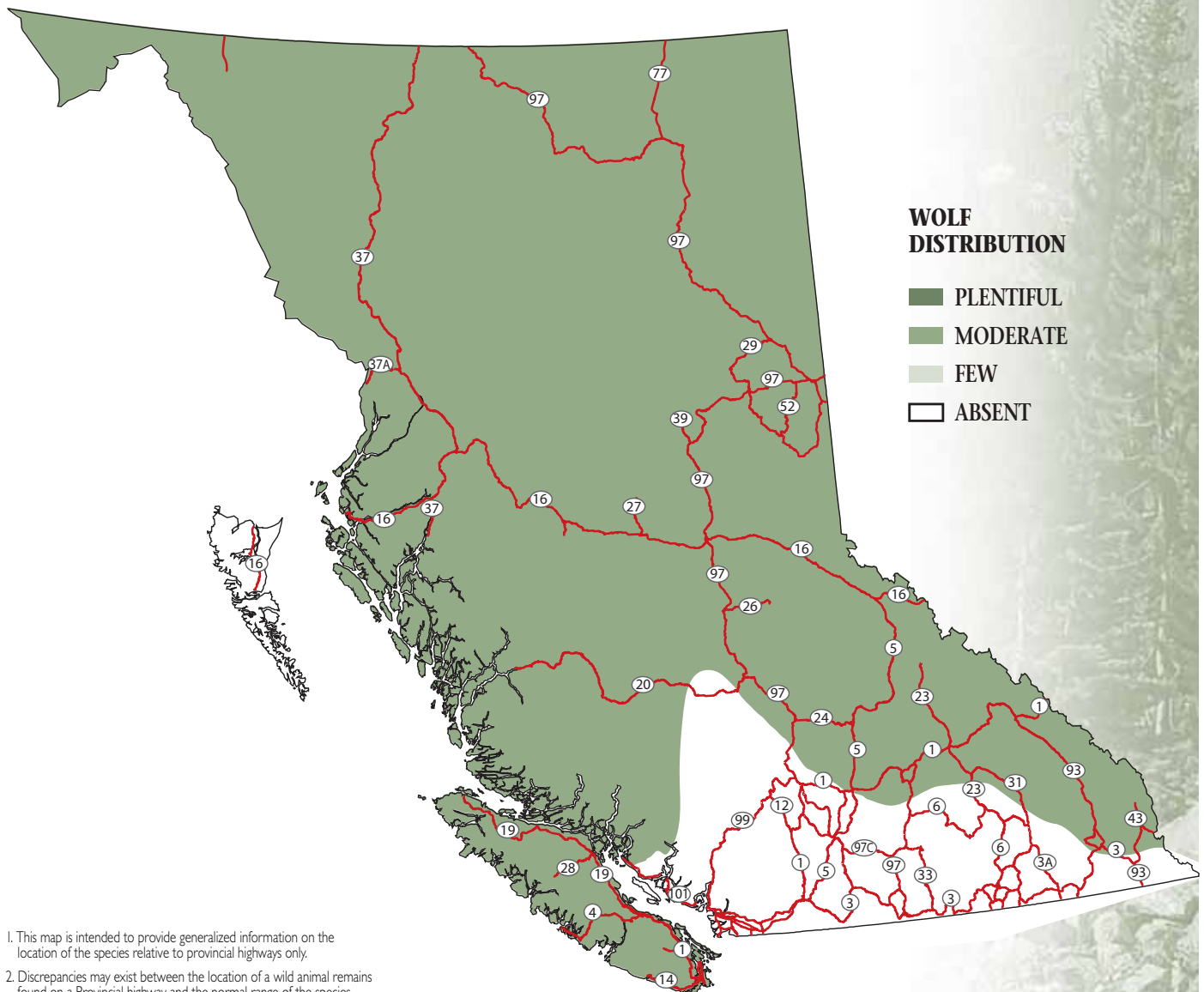


(Photo: Leonard Sielecki, BCMoT)



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**Map 2.12**



1. This map is intended to provide generalized information on the location of the species relative to provincial highways only.
2. Discrepancies may exist between the location of a wild animal remains found on a Provincial highway and the normal range of the species.