



*There is no scientific or biological need to hunt or trap wolves for sport.*

# The facts about wolves in Michigan's Upper Peninsula

In 2016, legislators ignored scientific evidence and the will of Michigan voters to pass a law authorizing a trophy hunting and commercial trapping season on our state's wolves, if their federal protections are removed.

Just because we *can* kill wolves doesn't mean we *should*. Wolves play a vital role in the ecosystem, strengthen deer populations, have cultural and intrinsic value, and create jobs and support businesses through ecotourism.

## Wolves pose little risk to humans.

Shy but curious, wolves may venture close if drawn by human feeding of deer—but still don't threaten or harm humans. Wolves in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and most lower 48 states are protected under the federal Endangered Species Act, but can still be legally killed if even *perceived* to be a human threat.

## Michigan DNR wolf population estimates:

- In 2011: 687
- In 2013: 658
- In 2014: 636
- In 2015: 618
- In 2018: 662
- In 2020: 695
- In 2022: 631

*Michigan's wolf population, which is spread over 16,400 square miles of U.P. habitat, has remained stable for more than 10 years.*

## Causes of wolf mortality

- Up to 60% of wolf pups may die during their first 6 months of life.
- Illegal killing accounted for 39% of radio-collared wolf deaths.
- Almost 61% of radio-collared wolf deaths are directly related to humans.

## Effective livestock protection resources are readily available.

The U.P. has more than 1,000 livestock farms and 50,000 head of cattle. Yet so far in 2023, *only 1 of those farms had a verified wolf conflict*. In 2022, only 3 farms had verified conflicts. Together, the Michigan DNR and USDA Wildlife Services work proactively with producers to minimize conflicts through effective non-lethal measures. Michigan livestock owners are compensated for confirmed predations and even suspected missing animals, which are extremely few compared to other mortalities caused by weather, disease, and birthing problems. However, scientific studies show that indiscriminate killing of wolves by trophy hunting and trapping may not mitigate livestock conflicts, but could make those few problems worse by dispersing packs and sending inexperienced juvenile wolves out on their own.

## Weather—not the wolf—affects U.P. deer abundance.

The U.P. has harsh winters, making deer survival difficult. Research shows that wolves target those that are easiest to catch: the sick and weak, thereby strengthening the deer herd. These deer are least desired by hunters and least likely to survive winter. And the Michigan DNR has reminded deer hunters that habitat improvement yields better results than blaming natural predators. The U.P. supports sufficient deer numbers for both wolves and human hunters.

## Wolves provide economic and ecological benefits.

There is compelling scientific evidence of top-down trophic effects generated by wolves because they alter deer movements, allowing for forest and habitat regeneration. While more research is needed, anecdotal evidence suggests wolves may limit the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease. Wolves also provide economic benefits to communities by drawing wildlife watchers, a rapidly growing industry.



For more information,  
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