

WILDLIFE

When nature is out of balance.

The wolf population at Isle Royale National Park has been dwindling for years but a new plan to introduce more wolves brings hope.

Isle Royale National Park is a remote island in Lake Superior. Researchers once documented a population of 50 wolves on the island in the 1980s. But with just two remaining, scientists believed a natural recovery was unlikely due to inbreeding. As top predator, wolves play a critical role in the health of the island. Without them, the island's moose population is growing and may double in the next four to five years, throwing the ecosystem out of balance as they devastate the island's vegetation.

In June 2018, the National Park Service announced they will introduce 20-30 wolves to Isle Royale over three years to address this imbalance. Beginning in late September, the Park Service began to successfully move wolves to the park from Minnesota.

REASONS FOR THE DECLINE

Wolves served as effective predators for decades, but over the years many factors reduced the population, including warming temperatures, which have compromised the wolves only route on and off the island.

Historically, ice bridges formed on Lake Superior to the mainland for more than 50 days a year, allowing wolves ample time to migrate. Over the last 20 years, these bridges have been far less common and consistent, stranding the two last wolves at Isle Royale and preventing newcomers.

SCIENCE INFORMS POLICY

Bolstering the Park Service analysis is the 60 years of research found in the Isle Royale Wolf-Moose study. The findings are compelling: without swift action, wolves would completely disappear and the balance of nature at this national park will precariously shift.

Rolf Peterson is one of the study researchers from Michigan Technological University who has spent his entire professional career researching the interactions of these two species in an isolated park environment.

"It's all about the integrity of the natural system...all the players have to be in place, and that includes top carnivores."

-Rolf Peterson, wolf researcher



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Wolves

1,475

Moose

60

Years of
scientific study



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NPCA.ORG/WOLVES

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HOW INTRODUCTION WORKS

It's not an easy job to safely capture wolves and transport them to a remote national park. The Park Service is working with the states of Michigan and Minnesota, as well as Canada and several Tribes to ensure that the wolves captured will be successfully relocated.

"Our primary concern is the health of each animal while in our care," says Phyllis Green, Isle Royale superintendent.

The wolves will be captured using humane methods and will be transported from the mainland to Isle Royale via plane, helicopter or boat.

They will be radio collared so scientists can learn from this historic event.

We will soon once again hear the unmistakable howl of wolves at Isle Royale National Park!

To learn more, visit:

www.npca.org/wolves

or contact Christine Goepfert at 612-270-8564 or cgoepfert@npca.org



NPCA has long advocated to bring new wolves to the national park to protect the long-term survival of this iconic species.

2013

NPCA brought together experts and community leaders to discuss the future of the wolves.

2015

NPCA and members submitted hundreds of comments in favor of introducing wolves to the park.

2017

NPCA continued to engage congressional offices and advocate for an introduction plan.

2018

National Park Service released its final plan to introduce 20-30 wolves over a three-year period.

