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Wolverines in Western Wyoming

Abstract

New records of the wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) from western Wyoming during the past two decades suggest a population increase for this region.

Although the wolverine is considered rare and is protected by Wyoming Game and Fish Department (1977), its status in western Wyoming remains uncertain (Weaver and Clark 1979). This note reviews historical literature and presents 50 new wolverine reports (Fig. 1) for western Wyoming, not including Yellowstone National Park.

According to Coues (1877:49), "Mr. C. Hart Merriam . . . procured a specimen on the Yellowstone River, Wyoming, in August, 1872." Thomas (1952) states that a Mr. W. H. Hill treed with dogs and shot a male wolverine in January 1899 near Kendall, Wyoming. Long (1965) listed only eight additional reports for 1900-1960, all from northwestern Wyoming. Houston (1978) recorded 27 wolverine reports in and immediately adjacent to Yellowstone National Park 1970-1978. Winter distribution of wolverines in the Park generally coincided with ungulate winter ranges where carrion was available.

We compiled recent reports from 1) field interviews with outfitters and other backcountry users during summer and fall, 1977-1979; 2) telephone interviews with and written inquiries of trappers, hunters, outfitters, and other experienced backcountry users; and 3) records of Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGF), Grand Teton National Park (GTNP), and Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF). Reports were evaluated according to the reliability of the observer, conditions of the observation, and/or the quality of detail provided. Numerous reports were omitted from this note for lack of detail, but all examined fell within the geographic area delineated herein. Details of reports are available from the authors.

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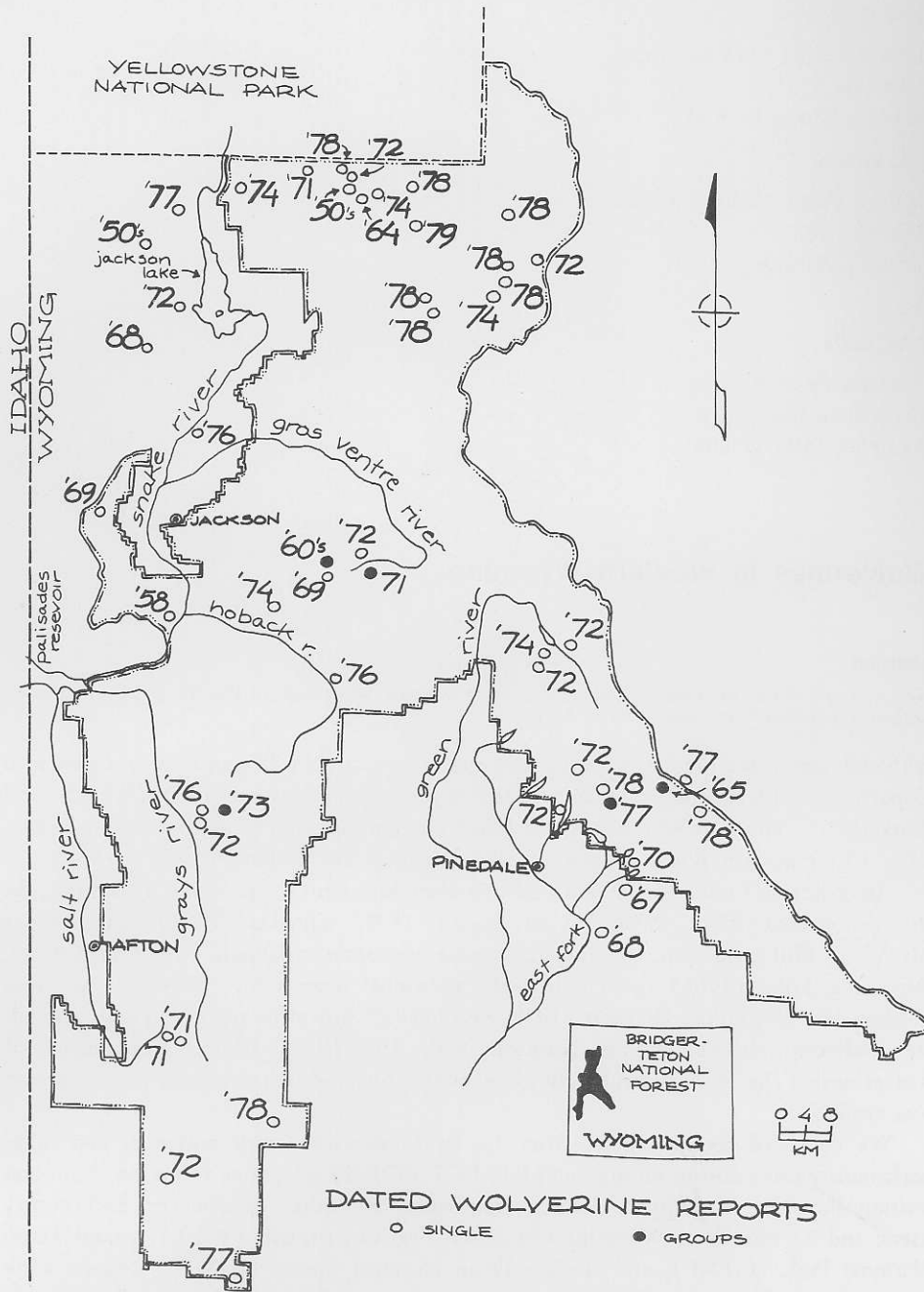


Figure 1. Location and year of 50 new wolverine reports in western Wyoming. Open circles indicate solitary animals; shaded circles, two or more wolverines (usually a family).

Wolverines occurred throughout the major mountain ranges of western Wyoming (Fig. 1), including areas farther south than previously reported. The apparent increase

of reports may reflect increased human use of remote areas, an extension of wolverine range, or both. We concur with Houston (1978) that the ban on poisons for predator control on Federal lands (Executive Order No. 11643) should benefit carrion-feeders such as the wolverine.

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