

Did you know that there were no wolves in Yellowstone National Park from 1926 to 1995? Prior to 1926 there was no US government protection over wolves so hunters and farmers killed every last wolf. After the wolves were gone, people realized that wolves quite literally changed rivers and many of the geographic features of Yellowstone.

How you ask? First, without wolves as predators, the elk and deer numbers shot up. When wolves were present, the elk and deer would stop to eat for a second and then keep moving. But when wolves were not in Yellowstone, the elk and deer would stop for a long time and eat plants and would graze out the riverbanks and fields. Once the wolves came back, they changed the elk and deer behavior so much that the elk and deer started to avoid places where they could get trapped, like valleys and ravines. In those places everything grew back, and in six years, entire forests grew back.

When the forests grew back, the songbird population grew a lot. Also because of the growth of the trees the number of beavers grew back. The dams they built provided homes for other animals like otters, muskrats, ducks, fish, reptiles and amphibians. Wolves also killed coyotes which meant rabbit and mice numbers grew back. The growth of bunny and mice populations meant more food for hawks, weasels, foxes, and badgers. Because of wolves return, the ravens, bald eagles, and bear numbers grew because they fed on the meat that wolves left behind.

Yes, wolves did bounce back in Yellowstone, but Yellowstone also bounced back in response to wolves. I decided to learn about wolves because about three months ago I had a privilege to meet two wolf dogs and one pure-bred wolf.

I was able to meet them because the school I go to works with a group called Apex Protection Project. Apex is a wolf shelter where they rescue wolves from people who have

them as a pet. During the year they did games every week with us to teach us communication and wolf tribe structure. (Did you know that wolves are socially the closest animal to us?) This showed me how beautiful and majestic these creatures are. I encourage you to also learn about wolves too.

This is why we have to put wolves on more states the endangered species list. We don't want what happened in the late 1900s to happen again. Let's also not hunt wolves, even if it is allowed some states. If we don't, in the future the I can see these beautiful creatures roaming and playing. One day I hope to go to national parks and see wolves everywhere.

#### References:

[www.wideopenspaces.com](http://www.wideopenspaces.com)

[www.apexprotectionproject.org](http://www.apexprotectionproject.org)

<https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/nature/wolf-restoration.htm>

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