

The Timber Wolf in Wisconsin: The Death And Life Of A Majestic Predator (North Coast Books)

Richard P. Thiel

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In early 1958, in the far northern town of Cornucopia, Wisconsin's "last" timber wolf was accidentally run over by an automobile. The "humane" intention to end the animal's suffering produced a grisly aftermath: the wolf survived the impact of the car, was bludgeoned with a tire iron twice but survived, and finally had its throat slit with a restaurant knife.

This horrifying scene is certainly an apt (if appalling) symbol of the timber wolf's early fate in Wisconsin. Feared, detested, hunted down for state-authorized bounties, the animal was systematically exterminated as an enemy of man and progress. Yet this bleak chapter in the history of conservation has a happier ending. Seventeen years later, in 1975, the timber wolf had officially reestablished itself and, as a protected species, is now flourishing under the care of Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources.

Few can be more caring than the author, a DNR educator in wildlife management. As an inquisitive teenager, Richard Thiel began his pursuit of the Wisconsin timber wolf's story in the mid-1960s and has been at it ever since. The result is this arresting, intensely readable book, a story of fear, mistrust, and misunderstanding that ends, thankfully, as one of hope and appreciation.



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