

Review: *Wolf Wars*

By Hank Fisher

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Fischer, Hank. WOLF WARS. Helena, MT: Falcon, c1995. 184 pp. US \$12.95 paper ISBN: 1-56044-352-9.

In WOLF WARS, Hank Fisher details an environmentalist's view of the political machinations leading up to the initial restorations of the gray wolf into Yellowstone National Park and the central Idaho wilderness in winter 1995. Fischer, a primary player in wolf and grizzly bear restoration, works out of the Missoula office of Defenders of Wildlife.

This account describes the capture of the wolves in Alberta and their release in the recovery areas, provides a history of the extermination of the wolf in the northwestern United States, and details some key players in the wildlife scene from Leopold to Mech and Bangs. Politicians, bureaucrats, and non-government officials are covered, and some surprises are in store for the reader who views these people in the stereotypical cliches so popular in today's sound-bite world.

One glaring omission is the lack of analysis of the role of the state wildlife agencies, none of which were authorized by the respective legislatures to participate in wolf restoration. It is common procedure for conservative western legislatures to withhold funds or restrict participation in wildlife activities perceived to be in conflict with the natural resources commodity interests. This essentially cedes management of state-owned wildlife to the federal government, where agencies are frequently ill-equipped to deal with local problems that state wildlife agencies could handle more effectively.

The Yellowstone recovery effort and the Montana experience are emphasized in this account. The author describes the participation of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the effort, but does not mention the role of the Forest Service and other federal agencies. The progression of wolf occupation in northwestern Glacier National Park and the underfunded but persistent commitment of Robert Ream and his associates in documenting their activities could have been given more space. The lone individual wolves that crossed over into Idaho are also not discussed in

any detail; the efforts of both state wildlife biologists and certain private citizens to document their presence would be worth considering in future accounts.

Nevertheless, Fischer records a remarkable event in wildlife conservation, that is highly readable and provides excellent coverage of many political events. This book will hold your interest up to the last word.

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